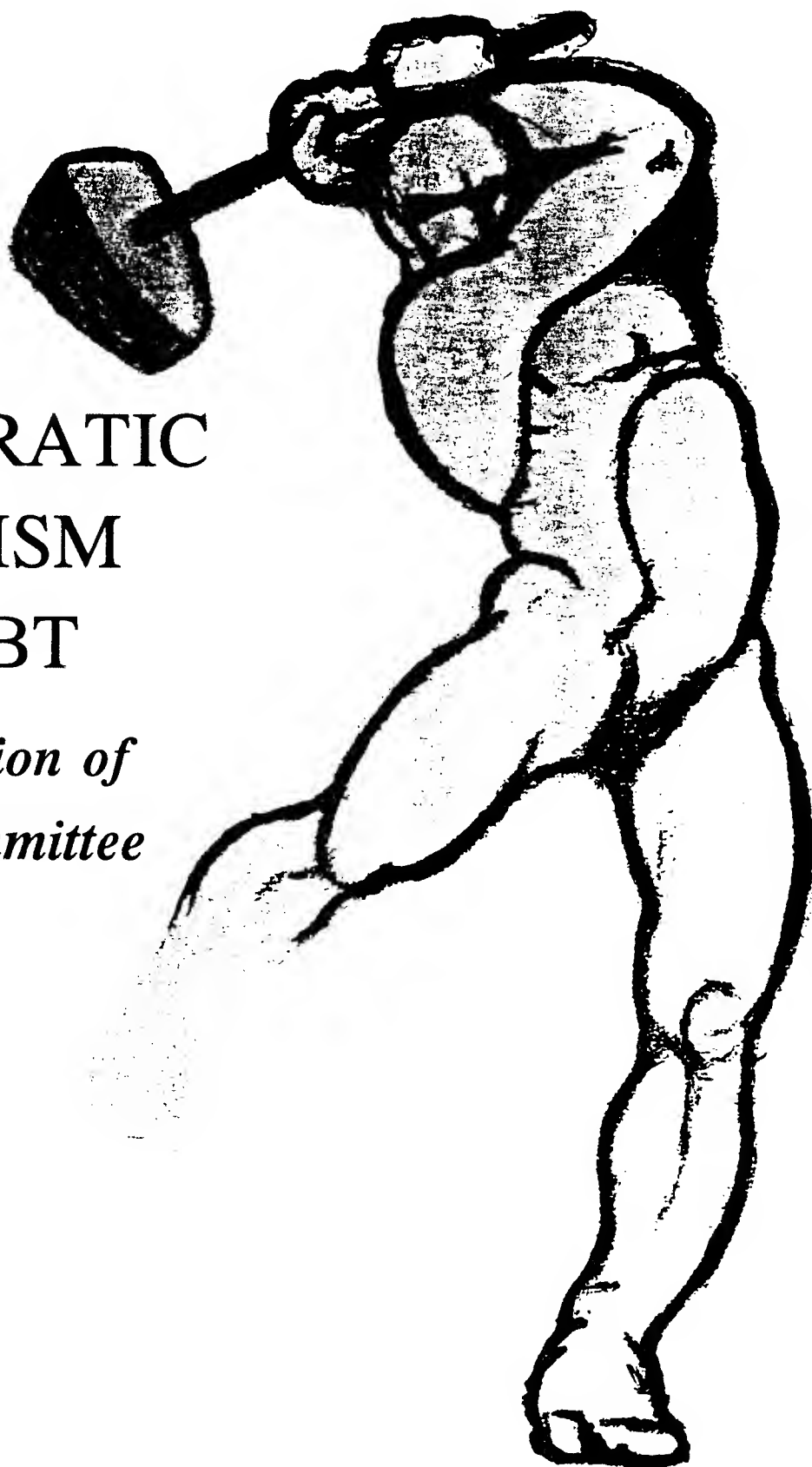


Historical Supplement

BUREAUCRATIC CENTRALISM IN THE IBT

*and the intervention of
the working committee*



Published by the
COMMUNIST WORKERS GROUP

**BUREAUCRATIC
CENTRALISM
IN THE IBT**

*and the intervention of
the working committee*

Published by the Communist Workers Group
Mailing address: P.O. Box 423177, San Francisco, CA 94142 USA

Labor Donated

Table of Contents

Introduction	iii
Text Of Presentation by Logan On "Private Correspondence" at BT/GIVI Conf., 8/5/90.....	1
Logan On the Question of the Press and National Sections	4
Logan on the Differing Roles of the IS and the IEC.....	4
On Differences Within the IEC:.....	5
Letter by Smith and Riker to Riley—9/21/90	6
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 1/15/92 (#21)	8
Letter from Logan—2/4/92	9
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat 2/12/92 (#22).....	10
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 3/6/92 (#23).....	10
Letter from Logan—3/8/92	10
Letter from Logan—3/17/92	15
Contretemps, Democratic Centralism and 1917 West	16
Just a Few Corrections.....	23
Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency Tasks and Perspectives—April 1992.....	24
1917—Finances—Letter from Riker to Nason—5/5/92.....	25
Letter from Riker to Nason—5/7/92	25
1917 West & Democratic Centralism.....	26
Letter from Harlan to Logan—6/28/92	29
Letter from Logan to Riker—7/6/92	29
Letter from Logan to Riley—7/6/92	30
Bay Area T&P and Interrelated Questions—7/6/92	30
On Clarity: Letter from Riker to Logan—7/7/92.....	32
Letter from Logan to Riley—7/8/92	32
Finances—Letter from Riker to IS/IEC—7/8/92.....	33
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 7/9/93 #26)	34
Letter from Logan to Riker—7/9/92	37
Letter from Smith to IEC—7/12/92	37
Letter from Riley to Smith—7/13/92.....	38
A Call from Gerald and Fred—7/13/92	38
"International Secretariat" Functioning—7/13/92	40
Letter from Riley to Logan—7/21/92	41
Letter from Barbara—9/14/92.....	42
One Spartacist League Is Enough—Part I	42
One Spartacist League Is Enough—Part II	47
Motions from the PRG on BABT Crisis—9/30/92.....	49
Money and its Evils—10/2/92.....	51
Reply to Cde. Riker on Finances.....	53
Motions by Logan to Settle BABT Dispute—10/3/92	55
Letter from Adaire to Smith/Riker—10/4/92.....	56
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/5/93 (#31).....	60
Threat in the Bay Area—10/5/92	61
Definition:	62
Some Illumination, Perhaps—10/6/92	62
Provocations/Responses—10/7/92.....	65
Provocation/Responses II—10/7/92.....	65
Letter From Logan/Boyd/Trent—10/9/92.....	65
Partial Transcript—10/10/92 BABT Meeting.....	66
Letter from Logan—10/11/92	70
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/12/93 (#32).....	70
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/16/93 (#33).....	72
Logan: Report On Developments—10/20/92	73
Letter from Adaire/PRG—10/18/92.....	74
Letter from David/PRG—10/18/92.....	74
Letter from Kalisch-Monsees/GS-Berlin—10/18/92.....	74
Motions by Logan—10/24/92	75

Letter to Logan 10/28/92.....	76
Letter to Logan from Clarke—10/28/92.....	77
Letter from Riker to Logan—11/10/92.....	77
BABT Motions—11/25/92.....	77
Letter from Logan to BABT Supporters—11/25/92.....	78
Letter from Boyd to IEC—11/27/92.....	79
Document by former Toronto BT Members	81
The “Holier than Thou” Brigade Comes to the Rescue.....	86
Working Committee Letter of Application to IBT	88
Letter from the BT/IEC—1/19/93.....	89
Letter from Janine to Boyd—1/24/93	92
Report of Physical Attack on Boyd by Smith—2/2/93.....	92
Letter from Riley to BABT—2/2/93.....	94
Letter from Trent to BT/IEC—2/3/93.....	94
Report of Physical Attack by Boyd on Smith.....	96
Letter from Working Committee to IBT/IEC—2/8/93	99
Mike A. Letter on BT Dispute—2/11/93	107
Statement by Riley for IEC—2/14/93.....	107
Letter from Montreal—2/14/93.....	109
Appeal to IEC by Boyd—2/15/93.....	113
Letter from Riley to Marc—2/15/93	113
PRG Organiser’s Report—December 1992/January 1993	113
Letter from Smith to BT/IEC—2/20/93	114
Letter from Boyd to BT/IS—2/22/93.....	114
Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 2/27/93 (no. 38).....	115
Correction to the Minutes.....	115
Letter from Smith to Riley—3/1/93	115
Letter from Riley to Smith—3/2/93	116
Report by Riley to IBT/IEC—3/3/93.....	116
Letter from Clarke to the IBT—3/31/93	117
Letter from the IBT—4/3/93	118
Letter from BT/IEC to Smith—4/13/93	118
Letter from BT/IEC, 4/17/93.....	119
Afterword by the Communist Workers Group	125

Introduction by the Communist Workers Group

Throughout the 20th century, in addition to the general obstacle of capitalism, the communist movement has faced a secondary obstacle of decisive significance.

"The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.... The multimillioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines."

Trotsky, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*

The multimillioned masses make no appearance in the documents that follow, but the crisis of leadership certainly does.

The documents collected here present the sad spectacle of a degenerating communist organization. There is, however, a little light at the end of the tunnel, for they also portray the prehistory of a new and — we sincerely hope — more constructive communist organization.

The degenerating organization is the International Bolshevik Tendency, and the new organization is the Communist Workers Group.

Viewed as a case study in the broader phenomenon of organizational degeneration, we think these documents are of some usefulness because, relatively speaking, the thoroughness of the written record is unusual. Moreover, the process of degeneration is caught at a critical phase. It is therefore possible to see something of the causes at work.

The documents are arranged in chronological order. The predecessor of the Communist Workers group, the Working Committee, appears only toward the end. This raises the question of continuity between the Working Committee and the previous unorganized responses of individuals in and around the IBT to the actions of the IBT leadership.

The Working Committee was formed as a democratic centralist group, and as such needed to work out its own line in a coherent manner. It therefore adopted the policy that only the statements of the Working Committee would be considered to constitute the line of the Working Committee. As the Working Committee wrote to the IBT leadership,

"You inquire as to our positions regarding various other documents and letters. In general, our position is that over time our tendency will generate its own documents....[W]e believe it most useful to examine the documentary record and the facts as we know them in their entirety. We find it appropriate neither to endorse nor to apologize for statements made during the recent controversy by persons not under our discipline at the time. As a tendency we reject all personalism, whether of the majority or of the minority."

—Letter to IBT IEC, February 8, 1993

The Working Committee considered that while the previous unorganized responses of individuals to the leadership's actions were flawed, the leadership's actions themselves were indefensible. Nonetheless, the Working Committee was composed of people who had been loyal supporters of the BT/IBT for years, and did not wish to conclude precipitously that the IBT was beyond redemption.

The Working Committee therefore resolved to put the IBT to an objective test, and applied as a tendency for membership in the IBT. If the IBT were still capable of functioning in a nonsectarian manner, it should be able to accept as members a group of long-term supporters who pledged to abide by the discipline of the organization and uphold its public line, but who considered the recent actions of the leadership to be bureaucratic.

The IBT failed this test. The Working Committee application was eventually rejected. Moreover, as the documents attest, the attitude of the IBT toward the Working Committee during the intervening period represented a crystallization of the pattern it had already exhibited.

The Working Committee was a temporary, nonpublic organization formed for the limited purpose of determining whether or not it was possible to avoid a split with the IBT. The IBT's sectarian rejection of the Working Committee application showed that a split could not be avoided.

The Communist Workers Group, successor to the Working Committee, is a full-fledged (if modest) public Trotskyist group. We take the somewhat unusual step of publishing these documents because we believe they have some educational value. They are full of examples of how not to build a communist organization, which is after all an important thing to know.

Highlights of the Documents

The **first** items in the collection are transcripts from the ad hoc fusion discussions with Group Fourth International (GIVI) in Berlin in 1990 that resulted in the formation of the International Bolshevik Tendency. A few months before, the **old** Bolshevik Tendency, based in North America and Germany, had fused with the New Zealand-based Permanent **Revolution** Group (PRG). The leaderships of all three organizations had come out of the Spartacist League in the late **seventies** to early eighties. One of the noteworthy features of the main bulk of the documents is the emergence of very Spartacist-like patterns in the IBT. The old BT in particular had paid a good deal of attention to the organizational **degeneration** of the SL, but lacked consensus on an alternative organizational model. Although it took some time for **this** to become fully evident, the 1990 fusions represented a turning point in this regard. The consolidated leadership developed a strong neo-Spartacist orientation. The IBT leadership clique has yet to exhibit some of the grosser pathology of the SL. Nonetheless, as the documents amply illustrate, the qualitative patterns are there.

The **main** significance of the Berlin transcripts is that they show Comrade Logan, who these days is the most influential **member** of the IBT, espousing as official policy positions 180 degrees opposite to what he and the rest of the majority maintain on some of the key disputed questions in the main bulk of the documents, which date from 1992-93.

The **next** item, another background piece, is a letter from Comrades Riker and Smith to Comrade Riley that shows some of the complexity of relations in the North American BT. The Riley clique had taken a dim view of the Bay Area local for years, notwithstanding the fact that the BT's own publications (edited by Riley) show that most of the BT's real political work occurred in the Bay Area. From day one of the BT/PRG fusion it was clear that Logan (and hence the rest of the PRG) was basically fusing with the Riley clique. This combination has set the tone in the IBT ever since.

The largest part of the documents are from an incredibly stupid, wasteful, and apolitical internal fight instigated by the IBT leadership in 1992, ostensibly over the Bay Area's publication of *1917 West* — not, as the IBT leadership has itself conceded, over its content or over the principle of whether or not it should be published, but over Riker and Smith's alleged failure to comply with **paperwork requirements** that turned out **never to have been voted on** by the leading body that allegedly established them. The leadership purported to believe that this represented "end-game political struggle" on behalf of "Menshevik localism" on the part of Riker and Smith. Over this weighty matter, hundreds of pages of internal documents were written (we reproduce only a selection), a secret "pro-party" faction was created, large sums of money were spent flying Comrade Logan to the Bay Area for two lengthy stays on stipend, and a spy was even commissioned to send secret reports on the functioning of Bay Area comrades to the international leadership. Riker and Smith were hounded and slandered and eventually driven out of the organization, and long-term BT supporters who questioned the leadership's actions were labeled as "sub-Mensheviks."

The final group of documents consists of the correspondence of our predecessor organization, the Working Committee, with the IBT leadership over this matter and the Working Committee's application to join the IBT as a tendency, along with some revealing related internal documents that we happened to gain access to.

The Communist Workers Group endorses the documents of the Working Committee and the Working Committee's statement quoted above. Some related discussion appears in *Revolutionary Theory* No.1.

Text Of Presentation by Logan On "Private Correspondence" at BT/GIVI Conf., 8/5/90

After some discussion, conference was reconvened to discuss the question of private vs. political correspondence. The session began with about a five-minute presentation by Logan.

Logan:

"There is no doubt that there is a right to private correspondence.

"There is no doubt that there is the right to have one's views published internally. But we seek to avoid discussion which is public in the tendency but undemocratic. It is important that every member of the tendency have access to documents which are public in the tendency.

"Imagine the situation of three sections, shall we say, Germany, the United States and New Zealand: There is a vicious fight between the German and the United States sections, and the United States writes to all the members of the New Zealand section about this dispute, without letting the German section know about this. That would be a grave breach of democratic centralism. It is necessary that there be a mechanism to ensure that the political discussion of the tendency, be the property of all members.

"Therefore, we have a process by which material must be circulated by the international leadership. They have no choice about this, it is a question of discipline according to the rules that they do so.

"But we do not allow people who are members of the organization to indulge in private publication internally. In practice it is not a big deal. It's not something we've got to worry about. And even if it happened once or twice in some incident or two, it would probably be only a matter of a slap on the wrist.

(Logan is interrupted here by Smith and Harlan who give additional explanations of the meaning of the English phrase "slap on the wrist").

Logan:

"But there are circumstances where it would be a serious thing and it would have to be brought to an end. And that is why we have the qualification to the rule of private correspondence. We say that comrades have the right to private correspondence, but that right should not be used as an excuse to circumvent the process of central coordination of discussion.

"It is impossible to draw a clear line in advance. Clearly you can write to one person—that's obvious. Clearly, if you are writing the same letter to 50 people, it's trying to get around the central (distribution).

"But there can be some cases in the middle where it's unclear. Those have got to be judged according to the circumstances. That's the nature of political life, determining when quantity turns into quality.

"The central coordination of discussion, at our stage, requires only being a mail box. Or even simply making sure that the members of the IEC who control the Compuserve outlet ensure the materials are transformed from Compuserve printouts are transformed into something that gets into every member's hand(s). It is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure the democratic rights of every member.

"But there can be circumstances in which a more active role of coordination is necessary. If a tendency of one university professor, produces two-hundred page documents, consisting solely of quotes from Lenin, and insists that they be distributed as discussion documents. It is the responsibility of the leadership, to say: 'hey, wait a moment'. We're going to limit discussion to ten pages a week, on any subject from any individual.

"The important thing is that the international leadership be fair. (But) it is impossible, in advance, to see all the dimensions of fairness. Ultimately, it is a political question.

"I could say a lot more but . . ."

A round of discussion occurs at this point on the tape.

During the discussion Smith made the following remarks on the round:

Smith:

"I think . . . this (discussion) is a reflection of our time. This era we're going through.

"Darkness seems to cover the entire globe today, everywhere the workers are in retreat. The collapse of the regimes in Eastern Europe in the absence of a revolutionary leadership, these countries seem to be moving in the direction of a restoration of capitalism. An extremely

depressing prospect.

“In the United States, strike after strike has gone down to ignoble defeat. Tell me: where are we winning? This is bound to have an effect on the way we look at things. It feeds a defeatist state of mind. I think that to a certain extent, this affects us all. Way back in the back of our minds, there exists a pessimistic strain. But as Trotskyists, our basic outlook must be, as Trotsky defined in “In Defense of Marxism” as “revolutionary optimism”.

“No matter how negative and bad our experiences may be, we cannot assume, we must not assume, that a political bandit awaits us at every corner.

“Suppose that me and Maria are in love. And I say (in a letter) ‘Dear Maria, I love you, and by the way, what did you think of the vote in the German section?’ We believe that a revolutionary should show the political portion of the letter, and we’re not particularly interested in the other part. It seems complex but it is really based on trust.

“You have to believe that it’s possible to construct a leadership of honest people. I would simply like to repeat to you something that James Cannon said. He said: ‘Party rules are for honest people, because the crooked people always find a way to go around the rules.’

“I think we are honest people and that we have no intention at all of violating anyone’s rights. But the problem remains, something that you said is quite true, this policy has what lawyers call a ‘chilling effect’ . . . it frightens people from writing. I believe this is a price we have to pay.”

Logan responds to discussion in his summary:

“We see the matter as extremely important. And we recognize the grave dangers which every organization faces in developing its practices in these areas.

“There is a very real danger that a degenerating organization will play with the correct procedures in this area, in order to win the organization to revisionist politics. Indeed I would say it would be absolutely, or very nearly absolutely guaranteed that if the organization, as it degenerates, will overthrow good practices in this area, and no clever drafting will prevent that.

“Our rules are not perhaps perfected, even to the degree of limited perfection that we can hope for. But we think they’re good, pretty good. The most important element perhaps, is that they include the right to bad practices. We have a right to private political correspondence. We have the right to correspond with any member of the organization, on any question, with only the qualification of bringing the organization into danger from the state.

“But it is not a good practice to encourage people to keep important private letters secret. They have a right to this secrecy, but we don’t encourage it. We’re extremely relaxed about incidental bits and pieces of politics in personal letters. And we leave the matter entirely up to comrades as to what they want to show.

“But, we do not give comrades the right to use that right of private correspondence, to launch a political struggle in a section of the organization.

“Of course, there are circumstances in which a comrade has a duty to break the rules of his organization. And, if an organization is degenerating, and you make a tactical calculation that this is the best way to pursue the struggle, and you think you won’t get caught, or if you get caught you will be able to get away with it politically, then you break the rules. As Trotsky did essentially at certain times.

“But our rules are not being made for a degenerating organization. Our rules are made for honest comrades, but we have also got to deal with a situation where some comrades want to use every lever they’ve got to further their opinions.

“What do we do if there is a debate between two tendencies, one centered in India and one centered in the United States. And it is necessary to limit the discussion to a hundred pages each month from each side. And the American comrades get around this, at great expense, by mailing internationally far more than that. That’s not fair.

“There’s got to be (unintelligible) assurance of democracy. It is the job of the leadership you elect, to ensure the democratic rights of all members.

“Of course there are difficulties with boundaries. Not only in this rule but in many others. I have been in organizations with rules on the use of illegal substances. We’re talking about the smoking of pot. Which, even when it is illegal, it is sometimes possible to allow in certain circumstances. And the difficulties of drawing the boundaries there are immense.

“But that is a fact of life and social reality. We’ve simply got to find some way of working out

what is going on here. And, although the party is involved, will no doubt feel aggrieved. Usually we can find out by discussion what is fair.

Referring to a question raised in the discussion period:

"On the question Lenin's correspondence, I'm sorry, but I do not know of any correspondence of Lenin after the development of democratic centralism, which was not known to the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and under its control.

During the session of the conference on the following day Logan made clarifying remarks:

"It seems to me that we should also report formally the (unintelligible—difficulty?) we reached last night of which most comrades are aware. That is in regard to the right to private correspondence and the right to the distribution of discussion materials. But the desirability that the discussion be organized in such a way which is open and equitable to all cdes in the tendency and equitable for all groupings in the tendency.

"So we wish to include the understanding that the right to private correspondence is not to be used as a way of circumventing the proper discussion processes. We will doubtless have to have further discussion on the point we can only report that the commission was unable to resolve the question. At present there is no proposed amendment to the draft.

Transcribed by Riker
9/16/92

Logan On the Question of the Press and National Sections

"The other material that we had to deal with was in regard to the (SPAD) brochure, and we can up with the following recommendations as a separate resolution.

"The IEC delegation on behalf of the BT supports the thrust of the material prepared for the SPAD brochure by GIVI with the participation by Cde Harlan. Both parties to the fusion understand, that editorial work is required on the brochure. Both parties believe that any outstanding political differences, can be resolved satisfactorily or if necessary, avoided in the brochure.

"If there are differences in the material to be included in the brochure, they should be resolved in terms of the national section's right to determine its own propaganda subject to the political line of the tendency as determined by its leading bodies of the tendency.

"The background to this is that there is at this stage an outstanding difference on the value of the interview with Gunther. Cdes of the BT believe that this material would make very good propaganda. Cdes of the GIVI are not so sure.

"It would be improper for the international to insist that the German section publish line in a prescribed form. Whilst we have opinions and will argue for them, ultimately the journalistic form which the line is presented in is up to the national section with the proviso that the international can insist that the material which is published in fact represents the line of the international tendency.

"Therefore, ultimately the national section could say: "no, we will not publish this interview." Of course the international might want to publish it in documents published by the IEC.

Later, in response to floor debate, Logan further clarifies the press question.

"... I have a little bit of the sense that you perceive the process of democratic centralism from the point of view of people trying to write a leaflet in Berlin, frustrated by the need for endless discussions on that with Toronto.

"A much more important problem for you is going to be how you are going to deal with things when you receive a draft of a leaflet from Wellington, which you have got to approve in exactly the same way that everything you write has got to be accepted, for political line, by the other groupings around the world. We do not have a center, you are part of the center.

Logan on the Differing Roles of the IS and the IEC

After discussion and obvious distrust in the GIVI ranks as to what the international tendency leadership duties and what the rights of the national sections would be, Logan made the following remarks.

"... The IS is the working bureau of the IEC. It has the responsibility to make sure that the trains run on time. That decisions are carried out and that it is clear what any given decision is. And to that end it might come to certain provisional decisions on its own account. And if it were absolutely crucial it could make a decision for action which was not of a provisional character.

"But that is very rare. In fact, its minutes are supposed to be produced with extreme rapidity, within a few days at most, and distributed to the members of the IEC. Who can then engage in discussion about those and amend them or vote on them.

"The IEC is the real organic political leadership of this tendency. That is where the power lies between international conferences. And if you're scared of bureaucracy in the organization, it is in the IEC that you should be worried. Think carefully when you select your representatives.

"I have never participated in the normal life of the IEC of the BT. And Gerald should be reminded that two fifths of the four members of the IEC have not previously been in the BT and slightly different norms than in the past could conceivably develop. The traditions of the PRG tend toward extreme liberalism on the question of what information should be available to members.

"On the other hand it is often not useful for members who are inexperienced or distant from a situation, to debate fine tactical details. The precise ways in which an exercise is going to be worked out for example, how we're going to construct the relations among IEC delegation in Berlin, is something that comrades in Wellington who have never met the comrades concerned are not going to have anything useful to say on it. And it would be better that they lent their attention to the programmatic documents.

"We have as a very strong principle that programmatic materials are open to the members. We

have also have very strongly as a principle that only where personnel questions or security questions are involved, can members of the IEC be under discipline to refrain from discussing these questions with members. While on administrative and tactical questions the IEC might well decide by consensus, that it will keep something within its own ranks that is essentially voluntary. It is Zinovievist to have an IEC discipline that is binding against the ranks.

On Differences Within the IEC:

"That's simply a matter of having discussions on Compuserve in most cases. Which is completely free-flowing. With pols via Compuserve as necessary. I hope I've answered the question.

"There is another point that I'm reminded of and that is the curious way in which we are suggesting in this case we're proposing that you have representatives on the IEC. Elected by a conference of this section.

"It would be normal for the IEC as a whole to be elected by the international conference. And it could be that some sections would get no representatives at all. Although that would be absurd in the present configuration. And, in any case, it is always essential that the IEC represent most political areas and political shadings in the organization. We insist that the IEC be the genuine organic leadership politically of our tendency.

"The leadership should represent all major political groupings in the tendency. But we do not have a conception of it as a federation. We seek for it to act as a leadership. And so, in a sense, I disagree with the argument that the IEC should not be an organization within the organization. It should become a whole. It should develop among itself develop relationships and political connections capable of pulling our tendency together in a united fist.

"The job of members of the IEC is not primarily to represent constituencies, its job is to represent the historic interest of the working class. We want an IEC that, as a whole, is the highest expression of Marxism on this planet. That is far more important than representing anyone's constituency.

"On the conception that we want an IEC that represents the highest consciousness, and on the conception that we seek to move toward a unified Marxist leadership, a wise IEC member seeks to allow other members of the IEC for whom they have some respect, to change their minds. And it is good to present your ideas and to listen to your peers on the IEC, before going with a minority position to the membership. But, of course, after you have listened to the other members of the IEC, if you continue to hold that minority position, then, it is appropriate to present it to the members.

"This is not a question of rules, you always have the right to argue for your views in the organization and in the membership. This is a question of good practice. And it is a voluntary question.

Transcribed by Riker
9/17/92

Letter by Smith and Riker to Riley—9/21/90

Dear Comrade,

And we do mean Dear Comrade for we consider you to be a comrade and a close political co-thinker and collaborator. What must we do to get you to understand our position vis-a-vis the tempest in a tea kettle you have created over the T-2 Democratic Centralism fight of 1987?

Although we have tried (how many times?) in the past to convince you that you are wrong when you dismiss this important fight with your contemptuous little epithets, we are willing to try once again.

We think what you, Nason, and Cullen have missed here is that the fight in BABT was a continuing process over many months. Yes, it included indisciplined behavior by comrades over the smoking question (although it was dishonest of you to include it without explaining the circumstances). There certainly was a lot of name calling — by all sides. Riker was, for example, called a political bandit, a gangster and it was said that he and Smith were trying to undermine a workers' strike. And no one will attempt to deny that the major participants (except Harlan) brought the terrible habit of interrupting speakers into the organization with them. In fact during his recent assignment in Germany Smith was repeatedly interrupted by Jensen while on the phone talking to Henning. All of the above is true and those were important factors in the equation.

What you seem incapable of understanding is that all the above departures from basic civil behavior were and are merely the symptoms of a very serious problem: A mode of functioning that inhibited our ability to hold a discussion, reach a decision and carry it out i.e. to get the work of the organization done.

On the one side we had Jensen who had put her very sweat and blood into creating an organization here. Energetic to a fault and as loyal a revolutionary as they have every made. And about as stubborn. Add to this an extreme individualism as regards the organizational question.

In any event, as you will know (having been involved in many of the disputes) it was a long fight — or rather series of fights, over where the organization was going, how to get there and what it was going to look like when it did finally arrive. And in nearly every case in our local the discussions were held at top volume, amidst histrionics and with great disregard for individual personal feelings. The consequences of this type of functioning alone constitutes a valuable lesson to be passed on. But we did move forward. With each fight we moved a little closer to getting the organization's work done. We had a fight over deadlines for articles. We ended up with deadlines for articles. We had a fight over delegating the work of the magazine to the Ed Board. We ended up with an Ed Board that first produced the articles and then submitted them for approval. We had several fights over the federated nature of the organization — a holdover from the ET days. We ended up with an EC that actually ran the organization rather than "coordinated" its activity.

But we also had fights over things like how to respond when we have someone in our periphery about whom there is a great deal of question as to which side of the class line he labors on (to put it euphemistically) and what to do about a comrade who, when assigned to intervene in a red-hot, potential split situation in an opponent organization — goes off to Mexico City to help clean up earthquake damage. And we had fights about what division of labor to make in the day-to-day work of the local and how much time we should allocate to the Campaign Against Apartheid anarco/reformists.

During this period Riker was (except for Harlan) Jensen's closest collaborator. Riker was the one who argued most frequently with her when he thought she was wrong. And when, during the attempt to recruit the LTT he found the tension of trying to convince Jensen to break with the old "kitchen table" methods of running the organization and try to form a working collective, he did something incredibly stupid: He pulled back and pronounced her "impossible to work with". Though not far from the truth, this, as you know, did nothing to ease the situation. Finally, after the fusion and into this embittered atmosphere, came the fight over the T-2 strike. And what a fight it was. It got nasty.

There were many objective factors that contributed to the tensions that in turn fed the tempers that repeatedly flared up: 1. The newly fused organization was not yet politically and organizationally consolidated. In particular the question of Polish Solidarity was STILL UNRESOLVED. Your compromise resolution put the old BTers in an awkward position, since the ex-LTTers considered strict adherence to it a test of good faith in terms of the fusion. We were walking on eggs.

2. Harlan was forced to continue working during the strike, sometimes double shifts. While this is certainly his right, we think that it is inescapable that such a level of physical exhaustion is bound to effect one's judgement.

3. Harlan was forced to work with a number of people, Chris K., J.H., Bob I., etc, that were decidedly and consciously not functioning under our discipline. We had no fraction. Our one member in the IBU was not yet consolidated! It was risky business.

Frankly we don't think you would have gone along with this situation half as long as we did had you been here, though you may have tried to deal with it differently. Jensen, who had been viewed as a central leader of

our tendency, flat out refused to accept the nomination to contact chair or play any role in helping to consolidate our new members. According to Jensen this IBU strike represented the BT's 1934! As the strike developed and Harlan was more and more pulled into the leadership of the anti-bureaucratic fight involving Jack H. and his supporters in the T-3 union, Smith and Riker became more and more concerned that the work of the organization was being liquidated into the strike. A strike where we had no direct role, or fraction, and only one (provisional) organization member. When we (in not the most diplomatic fashion) voiced our concern, Jensen rushed forward to defend our intervention on the absolutely incorrect grounds that this was an "important strike" that could possibly "lead to another 1934 general strike". History has already passed judgement as to who was correct in their assessment of the objective situation.

It wasn't 1934 (or even 1946) and, as we predicted, the strike was defeated and we did not get a single serious contact out of it — much less a member. We called a meeting of the EC, Jensen attended and Harlan boycotted the meeting. The majority of the EC, reflecting the majority sentiment in the local, passed a motion the effect of which was to pull the organization back and have another look at the situation. Jensen, in order to defend what she honestly (but incorrectly) saw as essential work in a proletarian arena, threatened to quit the organization if she and Harlan were not left to go their own way. The rest is history. Or at least it is history that we more or less agree upon.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the fight. Things got so hot, so strained, so bitter that we began to (by necessity) slowly change the way we conducted the fight. The worst offenders in the interrupting caucus were pulled back in the most unceremonious fashion and repeatedly censured by the local. We arrived at the consensus that civility was the oil of political life and that relations were going to be strained until some of that oil was poured on the troubled waters of BABT.

Furthermore, with the departure of Jensen and Harlan and the resignation of their supporters we set about, consciously, to build a collective leadership in BABT. And by-and-large we have succeeded. The local exec is now a third generation collective in which neither Smith nor Riker play a irreplaceable role. Local meetings are conducted without interruptions. Horseplay and name-calling are kept to a minimum during meetings. Most importantly, we have an excellent division of labor that allows us to function like a Leninist organization should.

But all of the above would not have been possible without the fight(s) we've been through here. Those fights, and particularly the fight over T-2 were fights about how to run an organization. They were, in the most fundamental and essential way, about democratic centralism. We now function as a democratic centralist organization, all proportions guarded.

It's too bad you guys may have gotten disgusted with the play and left after the second act, because in the finale we finally got out act together and have had it thus ever since. We consider the 1987 fight over T-2 and Democratic Centralism as one of our most treasured acquisitions! It is part of our political capital. We fought it and we won and we got a Bolshevik organization out of it. And nobody is going to take that away from us.

For you to now come along and dismiss our accomplishment, paid for with the blood of one of our most treasured cadre, as "contretemps" absolutely infuriates us. We don't know any other word to describe the depth of feeling here on this question.

It may be true that the young and inexperienced comrades who joined after the fight, or were not involved at the time, have been convinced that you are right in your contemptuous dismissal.

They may even constitute a majority of the organization (although that is not clear). But we are convinced that it is not merely of "archival" interest or "small potatoes" and for you to say so is an unprincipled attempt, in our opinion, to re-write the history of this organization and nothing less.

Anyone who takes the time to read the documents and listen to the description of the local before that fight and cares to visit the BABT today can not help but see that we are not the same organization. We made a leap during that fight and in the aftermath we put together a working collective based on equality and respect for the contributions that each member of the collective brings to the group.

When we gave a class in BABT in this question Cde. Boyd was assigned to go over all the material and pick out a representational assortment of all the positions, nuance and tone. He did a fine job and the tape is available for any cde who is interested.

But the distressing feature of the silly-ass motion that was passed by the IS and your even more perfidious statement that followed the motion passed in our local is the irrational and extremely self-destructive nature of these "statements" given the present juncture in the development of the BT internationally. Comrade Smith has given you some fairly extensive verbal reports. You have the tapes of the German fusion conference. Neither the PRG nor the Gruppe Spartakus fusion went all that smoothly. There are strong feelings in favor of "national autonomy" within the various groups that comprise our tendency. (Not least of all on the part of Harlan and Jensen!) Do you really want to start a senseless and counterproductive fight with the BABT over whether or not the IS must approve of the subject matter of our classes? See how far the will get you with the Germans or the PRG. Are you so blinded by the weird blend of your isolation and egoism that you can't see how stupid and petty your first command-

ment was? (Thou shalt not print the word "Bolshevik" on class materials!)

For the good of the organization we urge you to reconsider your untimely "executive action". We consider the IS motion "contretemps" and we feel compelled to warn you that such "methods" will not be useful in consolidating the two fusions we recently carried out. In counter-position to the irrational short cut to a centralized international tendency that you seem to have mistakenly embarked upon we urge you to consider comrade Trotsky's approach:

"In general, I must say the following: If the leadership wants to gain authority (and it is duty bound to want this) it must not proceed as if it already possesses unshatterable authority and must at first base itself as little as possible on its purely formal rights. The Executive must retain a quiet, friendly tone and show its utmost patience, especially towards its opponents. The Executive cannot gain any authority if it does not show in actuality to the entire organization its complete objectivity and conscientiousness in all sorts of conflicts and its concern about the organization as such. Only on this kind of authority, which cannot be achieved in one day, can organizational steps, disciplinary measures, etc., be based. Without this the organization cannot live. The attempt to use disciplinary measures without the necessary authority and without the conviction of the organization as to the correctness of these measures leads inevitably not to the strengthening of the organization but to its weakening, and above all to the collapse of the Executive itself." (Problems of the German Section, WLT [1930-31] pg. 143)

Make sense? Try it.

For Continued Collaboration
Despite Differences,
Smith and Riker

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 1/15/92 (#21)

FOR IEC
(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) Old business, 2) Finances, 3) Yugovote, 4) Personnel, 5) *1917*, 6) *1917 West*, 7) LO Fete

...

Re 6): This is the first opportunity we have had, as a body, to consider *1917 West*. While we welcome initiative on the part of locals, we are also concerned about any added burden that local projects may place upon our capacities and finances at a time when our North American membership is shrinking. We therefore suggest the following guidelines for *1917 West*: a) that it should limit itself to items of chiefly local interest in the Bay Area, and in no way attempt to compete with *1917*, either in content or sales; b) that the first issue be viewed as an experiment, and that any decisions about further publication be made in light of our overall needs in North America; c) that BABT expend no more than \$150 of organizational funds for the publication of this issue, and that any production expenses over this amount be raised independently by BABT; d) that all proposed articles be submitted in advance to the IS for approval;

...

Next Meeting: 3 February, 1992

Submitted by Cullen,
16 Jan., 1992;
Approved 19 January

Letter from Logan—2/4/92

TO: ALL BRANCHES

Dear comrades,

It was good to get Jim's letter, and I agree with his comments on *1917 West*. On the question of paedophilia, I don't know that we have any programmatic differences, but I think I do see some of the considerations differently, and would like to continue the discussion at a later point. What I want to address in this letter is the question of the delay in publication of *1917*.

I leave aside the question of whether before the current discussion we had sufficient basis for publishing an article on Yugoslavia, except to say that the points on which we might have agreed would seem likely to produce an article uncomfortably close to *Workers Power* in methodology.

What I want to address here is the question of priorities.

First is the question of whether the IEC was sufficiently informed to make a correct decision. Jim says:

I think Tom and I have not until now been emphatic enough in stating our common view that this decision ... was ... extremely unwise from the vantage-point of the North American section.

Now I must concede he might be right. A decision on something like the relative priorities of clarification on the Yugoslav question and getting out an issue of *1917* is a matter of balance. The judgement of members of the IEC on how to assess the balance of considerations is dependent on the information available to them. Perhaps we did not have enough information. It is, frankly, difficult to assess the needs of our North American groups in the absence of better data. So it is not only important, as Jim says, that any proposal for a new initiative be circulated internationally in writing. It is also important that there is better ongoing reporting from members of the IEC (and other comrades) to the IEC. And it is a matter of priority that a higher proportion of the interactions of leading American members among themselves be in writing and via Compuserve, with copies circulated internationally.

I take Jim's point that

The postponement of this already infrequent magazine seriously impairs our ability cohere the views of our own members, to win new ones and to take advantage of valuable opportunities to polemicize with our opponents. Such postponement can therefore easily result in organizational drift and disarray.

We were not unmindful of that consideration, although possibly it would have been useful to be made more aware of the dangers in the North American context. But in any case that consideration must be balanced against the importance of developing Trotskyism to make it relevant to the post-Stalinist world, which will prove essential in cohering an international tendency.

I agree in general with the view that

The Yugoslav events, bloody and horrible as they are, are nevertheless secondary in importance to the main drama now being played out in the former Soviet Union. If we are not prepared in future to write articles that leave certain theoretical questions unanswered, if we are not willing to defer judgement on certain secondary questions until more information becomes available, then we may not be able to write anything at all.

This is a point that in particular the German comrades must assimilate. However, I am not convinced that this should have been the overriding consideration in this case.

Although we came out of the discussion on the attempted coup with the outline of a position on the process of the demise of Stalinism - the correct position - we were not as a tendency consolidated around that position. Indeed in my judgement our lack of political consolidation on the question was bringing us very close to the most serious international organisational consequences.

(Subsequently, in discussions with Henning, this judgement was confirmed. Although Henning himself was always aware that this was not a principled split issue, we live, and he lives, with the reality of a German group in which even some senior members do not have a well-developed sense of proportion in politics.)

The urgency of the German comrades on the question of Yugoslavia was both an expression of the political and organisational problems, and an opportunity to move towards greater cohesion. Although Yugoslavia itself was secondary, it provided a framework in which to work on the central historical and international questions of the moment.

And I believe there is a real possibility that the discussion that we have had, though it obviously has not achieved unanimity, has averted the likelihood of a disaster.

So while I concede that the decision we made might well have given insufficient heed to the needs of our North American groups, I am still inclined to believe that there were overwhelming international considerations which called for delaying *1917*.

CGs
Bill

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat 2/12/92 (#22)

FOR IEC

(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) Old business, 2) *1917 West*, 3) BABT 4) *1917*, 5) Martha Phillips' funeral, 6) LO Fete

... Re 2): a) We have received, amended and approved all *1917 West* articles but the gay and NAMBLA articles, which we would like to receive immediately; b) We have received neither the requested sales figures for *1917* nos. 8, 9 and 10 from BABT, nor any written proposal from BABT concerning the first issue of *1917 West* (including projected production methods, cost, quantity to be printed, etc.) (See attached letters from Riley);

Re 3): a) We have not received an organizer's report from BABT since February, 1991; b) We don't know who the BABT treasurer is;

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 3/6/92 (#23)

FOR IEC:

(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) Computer policy, 2) Britain, 3) LO fete, 4) *1917*, 5) Germany, 6) *1917 West*

...

Re 6):

The problems with *1917 West* appear to be coming to a head. So far there has been no proposal from BABT as requested by the IS. It is important that this problem be resolved so that the organization can go forward. There is a proposal to send a senior IEC member to BABT for an extended visit.

Submitted by Cullen, 7 March, 1992—Approved 9 March 1992

Letter from Logan—3/8/92

FROM: BILL

TO: ALL COMRADES

COPIES: ALL POINTS

SUBJECT: CRISIS IN THE BAY AREA

Dear comrades

There is a notion that the most important thing about a propaganda group is that it puts out propaganda. Nonsense. The two most important things about a propaganda group are that it is a group, and that the line is more or less right. Getting out propaganda comes about number three in the list.

Recently we have as an international been trying to get the line right in a very changed world. Now I'm afraid we have to make sure we are a group.

There is an important conflict between the BABT and the IS about the publication of *1917 West*.

The IS has made its position clear. The IS minutes of 15 January say:

"This is the first opportunity we have had, as a body, to consider *1917 West*. While we welcome initiative on the part of locals, we are also concerned about any added burden that local projects may place upon our capacities and finances at a time when our North American membership is shrinking. We therefore suggest the following guidelines for *1917 West*: a) that it should limit itself to items of chiefly local interest in the Bay Area, and in no way attempt to compete with *1917*, either in content or sales; b) that the first issue be viewed as an experiment, and that any decisions about further publication be made in light of our overall needs in North America; c) that BABT expend no more than \$150 of organizational funds for the publication of this issue, and that any production expenses over this amount be raised independently by BABT; d) that all proposed articles be submitted in advance to the IS for approval; . . ."

A letter of 28 January from Tom to the BABT comrades says:

"Just so that everything is perfectly clear:

"1) the IS must first explicitly approve the articles [before] they go to a printer, or a xerox machine or anywhere else.

"2) before any money is spent on this venture (including the \$150 proposed) we want to have a clear and explicit proposal, with costs from the local. Only after such a proposal has been discussed and explicitly approved by the IS may any money be spent. So far we have yet to see a proposal".

A letter of 19 February from Tom says:

"So far we have had no written proposal from you. As we indicated in our earlier correspondence we must receive and approve such a proposal before any steps are taken to bring out the experimental *1917 West* issue".

No member of the IEC has registered to the IEC any problem with these decisions. THEY ARE IN FORCE. That is the way we work, and the way we SHOULD work. The IS is the executive subcommittee of the IEC. When it speaks it carries the full authority of the IEC. It is subordinate, of course, to the IEC, and its decisions are open before the IEC so that any member of the IEC can move to overrule any decision of the IS. But to flout the authority of the IS is to flout the authority of the IEC.

And the IEC carries the full authority of the international organisation between conferences.

In this case nobody has challenged the decision of the IS before the IEC.

And the fact is that the IS guidelines for the publication of *1917 West* actually represent the public opinion of the tendency - or are somewhat easier on the Bay Area comrades than the public opinion of the tendency.

David from here said in a letter of 29 January:

"... the decision spelled out in the IS minutes seems reasonable. Unfortunately, from the copy received by us on January 27 (with a note by Smith to return comment by "Tuesday"), *1917 West* comes across as simply an alternative *1917*: clearly in contradiction to the IS decision".

Marcus (6 February) expressed considerable reservations about the *1917 West* project.

I said (30 January):

"I'm not so sure that I am convinced of the wisdom of *1917 West*.... The decision to publish this, even in the framework outlined by the IS, is a decision to commit considerable amounts of the international's resources to the project".

The bottom line, however, is that the whole tendency INCLUDING APPARENTLY THE BABT accepted the decisions of the IS.

If the Bay Area comrades did not accept these decision it had a responsibility to argue openly before the IEC for their position. The Bay Area comrades have not deigned to do that.

If they fail to carry out the full intent of decisions they show themselves as ... well ... something not very nice.

I am without doubt that the BABT has been less than fully conscientious about carrying out the intent of the IS decision. It is clear from the pattern of correspondence that the BABT has done little about preparing a proposal and paid scant regard for the IS instruction that articles must be approved in advance before they go to the printer.

For example, look at this 26 January letter from Gerald:

"We plan to go to the printer Tuesday.... If there is any disagreement with the line in any of these articles please get back to me before Tuesday".

Or this 3 March letter from Drew to Dub:

"*1917 West* is scheduled to hit the streets in another week and we are looking for articles for issue no.2".

Or this 3 March letter from Gerald:

"Time has unfortunately run away with things here and we have had to move forward with the production of *1917 West*. Unfortunately we can not wait for your expanded version of the Gay article. However, Henry has integrated all your suggested changes in the final draft. We also inserted your final two paragraphs into the NAMBLA article. Thanks a lot for all your help. Please do not put any further work into the Gay piece as it will probably not make it here before the magazine goes to the printer".

And in the mean time the evidence is that NOTHING had been done about a written proposal.

It is hard to think of an excuse for this stuff. But even if there is one, and even if that excuse is perfectly valid, the BABT's unconscionable delay in explaining itself puts it in a very bad light.

The BABT will doubtless tell us it has been busy. But that is a question of priorities. The fact is that the BABT was in dispute with the IS about the most important activity of the branch. Explaining that dispute to the international should have been its most important priority. It is qualitatively more important to settle significant disputes among revolutionaries than it is to get out propaganda. That proposition lies at the core of Leninism.

At one level it is pretty simple: your comrades are those you discuss what you are doing with, what your programmatic positions are, and what your perspectives are. To the extent you fail to discuss such questions with someone, you are not treating that person as a comrade.

My own work in support of *1917 West* is a useful illustration of the need for international discussion and collaboration, and the difficulties of collaboration in this case. My contribution was on the article on the gay question.

I received all the drafts on 27 January, and sent considerable notes on the gay article three days later, with a suggestion that if the Bay Area comrades tried to integrate those ideas and got the draft back to me, I would be able to do some more work. I received a second version on 18 February.

As usual, everything was super-urgent. The BABT wanted to go to press. It was important to refrain from minor, bitty criticisms, in the interests of getting it out. There were all sorts of little bits and pieces which might have been tidied up, but I could live with those; I am thoroughly opposed to counsels of editorial perfection. But the draft was politically inadequate. Although someone had integrated a number of my suggestions, perhaps I hadn't been sufficiently clear about other suggestions. And some new mistakes had also crept in, making it in some ways more problematic than the first draft. It even called people with AIDS "victims", which is a serious turn-off to most of the target audience.

It was a good DRAFT. But it would have been a bad PUBLISHED ARTICLE. If it had been printed I would have argued hard for scrapping all copies.

This was the time of my accident, and I left it at some ill-tempered comments until the IS sent me an improved redraft on 21 Feb with a request that I work on it.

By this stage the article wasn't too bad, but still had two important political flaws. It did not sufficiently stress that we would act in solidarity with gay-liberation and AIDS-related political actions which are consistent with our programme. And it still hadn't got it right on "outing". I would still not have felt proud to show the article to gay friends, nor would I have found it so terribly helpful in trying to recruit in a gay milieu. I did the necessary work and returned it to the IS within four days. (I hope this is longer than my usual throughput, but there were unusual circumstances.)

Now I did not send it directly to the BABT because the IS had made it quite clear that it must approve all articles. And besides, my changes represented actual changes in the political line of the article, which had to be checked by the IS. I am at least as capable as anyone else of making a mistake. And, moreover, working under pressure, I knew I had committed various stylistic sins requiring correction. Sending an obviously inadequate draft back to the Bay Area would not have been a service to anyone.

On Friday 6 March I got a note from Gerald, saying he had heard from Drew that I had done some work on the article and asked me to send my draft along.

It seemed strange that Gerald wanted my non-final draft, which was unpublishable within the conditions laid down by the IS. Why wasn't he asking the IS for IT'S final editing?

This letter seemed to be an indication of difficulties at a more worrying level than I had hitherto gathered.

What I did was ring Gerald, and I spoke with him for about an hour, from say 7.30pm to 8.30 pm (NZ time). It was a pretty amicable discussion in some ways, although Gerald was very angry, especially with Tom.

Gerald seemed deeply committed to a particular conception of *1917 West*, involving proper printing with photographs. I gathered that the intentions of the comrades are to print 1000 copies of *1917 West*, at a cost of \$480 plus \$10 per photograph. They plan to sell it at 50 cents a copy. Gerald explained that \$150 was to come from pledge income, and the rest has been raised especially for the project from contacts - in particular Ken M., Mike A and Vince were mentioned.

It was clear that Gerald regarded any attempt to place limitations on this project as completely illegitimate.

I have a variety of reservations about the project in the form proposed by Gerald.

In the first place it would seem disproportionate to the comrades' proven sales ability, and therefore grossly extravagant. My understanding is that with six comrades the BABT sold about 230 copies of *1917* No. 10 over a year. They now, I understand, have four members.

In the second place such a print run and the associated sales inevitably represents unacceptable competition with *1917* proper.

In the third place the format of a printed journal gives rise to the expectation (internally and external-

ly) of future issues, and it also lends the journal considerable authority. To the extent that this venture continued on this basis the international leadership would have to give it close continuing guidance and supervision. And we simply do not have the time. *1917 West* is a serious threat to *1917* proper.

Gerald's conception of international democratic centralism as expressed in this conversation involves a separation of programmatic and organisational questions, leaving no place for control by higher bodies over the actions of a branch, so long as the branch is consistent with the formal programme. His conception seems to allow for a branch to set its own tasks and perspectives entirely independently of the international organisation. He claimed, almost as a principle, that it is incorrect for higher bodies to intervene in branches on organisational questions.

He clearly disagrees in principle with our existing financial norms which centre around the proposition that all income of every branch or OC is the property of the IBT as a whole.

There would appear to be important differences on these questions, and the comrade has a responsibility to explain his position.

Gerald holds the International Secretariat in low regard, and believes the IEC has been duped by it. It is unclear to me whether he believes that he has a responsibility to carry out the decisions of either.

He further appears to have a fundamental disagreement with the kind of journal we have as the central organ of the tendency, and its general editorial policy. I think he believes it is insufficiently popular in style, too infrequent, too concerned with perfection of detail, and centering too much on questions of high Trotskyism. (Some of these views I have heard before. They were motivated but not accepted at the Oakland 1990 fusion conference. It will be noted that there has been no attempt at open political struggle for these ideas since then, despite the change in the composition of the organisation.)

Gerald himself said that there was a need for a discussion around our perspectives, which is certainly true. It is clear that Gerald disagrees with the existing perspectives of the organisation. But apparently he thinks it is correct to lead the comrades of his branch in accord with the perspectives HE thinks best, BEFORE those perspectives are accepted by the tendency - before they have even been presented to his peers on the IEC.

It is always difficult for me to read Gerald's tone, or the level of the intensity of his feelings, but even allowing for Gerald's customary flamboyancy of phrase, I would judge that he is extremely wound up over this one. I won't repeat the words I took down, but he seemed to be saying that the IS is a small, sectarian, isolated, apolitical, pedantic, arrogant, manoeuvring, manipulative group of cronies.

In discussion I expressed firmly my firm opinion that the IS requirement for a proposal for *1917 West* was correct, and that even if it were not correct it was still an IS requirement which must be met. I made it clear that however bad he thought the decision was, he could hardly expect ANYONE outside the Bay Area to agree with him, when he hadn't communicated his views. He should have understood from what I said that on this the Bay Area are on their own.

Gerald agreed that the printing would be delayed, pending the preparation of a formal proposal.

It was unclear to me whether the project would proceed if the proposal were unacceptable to the IS.

I think I made it pretty clear that we could not accept the continued open defiance of the IS. I don't know how close we are to that being the issue, but I cannot imagine anyone outside the Bay Area being of any other opinion than that such defiance must lead to very strong disciplinary action.

The Bay Area comrades, in a period of great pressure and after some defeats, seem to have isolated themselves off from the tendency through a failure to communicate. In their isolation they have come up with a scheme which they hope will solve their problems, and they have invested a great deal in that scheme. I worry they might be more committed to that scheme than to the IBT.

Of course I don't think the comrades are going anywhere else. I can't imagine where they would go. I don't imagine they have even thought ahead very far. But the situation is worrisome, because comrades are getting into positions which are both unviable and difficult to vacate. It is difficult to see an outcome which won't further demoralise the comrades. And that must be of overwhelming concern to us.

I told Gerald that I should come over to the Bay Area for six weeks or so as soon as possible, although I would need to be supported while I was there. I said that I believed this was more important than any other travel, for instance of North American comrades to Europe.

Gerald greeted this suggestion warmly, invited me to stay with him, and assured me that I would be fed and all.

I have discussed this idea with Henning, the PRG executive, and with the IS, and the IS have authorised the trip; in the circumstances they regard it as crucial.

I rather think I should try to get there in the next few days, but in this capital-forsaken country you cannot do much about bookings until tomorrow (Monday).

The IS want the ticket purchased in San Francisco, for me to pick up in Wellington. I spoke to Gerald again this afternoon to tell him that, and he is on to looking at fares from that end.

I believe that the IS must continue to supervise the *1917 West* project in more or less the way it has been doing, subject to the normal surveillance by the IEC and the IEC's right to intervene if it deems necessary.

I intend in a few days to move some motions for discussion and decision by the IEC on the relevant principles of international democratic centralism. The following are working drafts, and I would request comrades who are sympathetic to their central thrust to suggest improvements before I formally move them:-

1 The IEC reaffirms that between conference it has final authority over all IBT members, and over all bodies of the IBT whether local, national or international, and over all IBT publications, public or internal, local, national or international. The decisions of the IEC are binding on the every member and every body of the IBT.

2 The IEC reaffirms that it has vested all executive powers of the IEC in its subordinate subcommittee, the International Secretariat. The decisions of the IS carry the authority of the IEC until and unless they are countermanded or amended by the IEC.

3 The IEC reaffirms the current rule that all monies in local or national treasuries are at the disposal of the IEC. It is the IEC's intention to maintain this rule until we establish a central treasury.

4 The IEC would regard the deliberate flouting of the decisions of the IS or its representatives as a grave breach of discipline, and would expect action accordingly.

CGs
Bill

Letter from Logan—3/17/92

From: Bill

To: IEC

Copies: All points

Subject: Developments

Dear comrades,

So there was the branch meeting on Saturday at which Fred presented a proof copy of *1917 West*.

Since then I have done some talking to Drew, and a lot to Gerald. Yesterday Dov came to breakfast and last night there was a social with a number of contacts.

I am feeling my way rather carefully, and do not have any overall suggested plan for my time here yet. I am starting to get a picture of the branch and its milieu. My initial impression is that there are a number of favourable opportunities around - far more than in Wellington - but that with only four members we will need very clear and restricted priorities in order to take advantage of those opportunities. I am not sure that the branch yet has sufficient clarity on its immediate objectives.

It is fairly clear that the indiscipline on *1917 West* arose in the context of a pattern of arguments, tensions and resentments which have accumulated over the years. This pattern is an inheritance from the old North American BT, and is structured by the direct relationship between our Bay Area branch and Tom in Toronto. So failure to comply with the reasonable requirements made by the international through Tom is excused by various claimed errors or improprieties of Tom.

Even though it would be fundamentally irrelevant if all the complaints were justified, for therapeutic reasons it will probably be necessary for me to go into some of the specific complaints - doubtless a bottomless pit.

There is a personal dimension to this tension; Gerald, for example, seems to have a peculiar love-hate attitude towards Tom which intensifies his reactions to him.

There is also a political dimension. I suspect all the comrades in the Bay Area believe in a more pedagogic kind of press, directed at wider layers that they believe Tom intends to address. That political question must clearly be discussed in the tendency as a whole. It is a question which can easily become confused with other questions, such as standards, editing styles and so on. And it is also a question on which every propaganda group must have a spectrum of opinion, and on which the internal life of propaganda groups have historically often become falsely polarised. It is helpful if comrades at different points on the spectrum recognise that this is a question of emphasis.

If we address this question properly (and internationally rather than merely among the North American comrades) I believe we will be able to reach agreements within which we can co-exist.

I have heard a number of complaints, of course, about Tom's supposed over-editing. I take these complaints with a grain of salt, though perhaps I will look at some actual examples during my stay here. However, since my first day as a junior sub-editor on a daily bourgeois newspaper in New Zealand twenty-five years ago I have heard - and been subject to - innumerable complaints about over-editing. It is something every editor lives with.

Of course sometimes things ARE over-edited. The question though must always be - is the final product as good as possible in all the circumstances? In this area there cannot be too many concessions to personal or local considerations.

The relationship between a writer and an editor is always a difficult one, and it is probably worth putting some effort into. On *Workers Vanguard* one of the most important functions of ed board meetings was to explain to writers what had to be done to their drafts and why, and perhaps we need to find some equivalent process appropriate to our dispersed situation. One possibility is that after an issue of the press is out, the major editors of articles should go back to the first draft received and write some upper case notes on it, for general distribution. This would have a useful training role for everyone, and in the long run would probably save editorial time.

One part of the resolution of the pattern of tensions involves the BABT leaving the old BT behind and becoming a branch of the international. Any bilateral relationship can become fraught, and in any case a bilateral relationship is not nearly as rich as a multi-lateral collective. In this case we have an immediate need to buffer the relationship between Tom and this branch, but irrespective of that we would seek the forming of a more complex web of international political links.

I would propose that ALL members of the branch be encouraged to write frequent letters for international distribution. Those letters might often focus on what is going on in the branch, but they might also deal with any political question facing us. It is particularly important that Gerald spend at least (say) three hours a week writing a letter to the organisation.

There are no simple answers to the question of how to reestablish adherence to international democratic centralism in this branch, and I appreciate the IEC giving me some tactical latitude. I am not yet sure of

the parts played in the whole saga by the different comrades, or the extent of branch collectivity in the decision to defy the international. I will talk to all the comrades at length in due course, but even the branch meeting tomorrow night should bring the picture into sharper focus.

One interesting development is that Drew discovered that the union bug had been left off *1917 West*. This is the label which certifies that the thing is printed by union labour, and in the American context it is, I believe, impermissible to publish without it. I gather that Fred accepts responsibility and will personally pay for a reprinting.

CGs

Bill

Contretemps, Democratic Centralism and 1917 West

(Excerpt)

"In such a slow period sometimes comrades become impatient and then, trying to leap over objective conditions make proposals that are unrealistic for an organization our size. When this happens...the situation must be discussed calmly and rationally and the comrades shown where they've made a mistake. When it is not it can lead to severe 'factional' convulsions. When the internal situation develops to this point extreme caution must be exercised by the entire organization or an ugly and unnecessary split can occur."

—Fred Riker, "The Struggle for a Democratic Centralist Organization

—The Question of Questions," 1987 (pg. 7)

I suppose that I should be pleased to have finally got a presentation of grievances and current organizational conceptions from Cdes. Fred and Gerald. I cannot honestly say however that I listened to the tapes of the 17 March BAPT local meeting with a great deal of pleasure. In general I found their accusations rather thin when it came to history, examples, evidence, etc. Many of the allegations were either wrong or based on only partial information. The comrades object to the "tone" of the IS communications with them, but I hope they will not take it too hard if I suggest that their "tone" on the tapes could also be improved upon.

For so much heat and bad feeling to arise there must be something at the root. And given that two of our cadres have decided that whatever it is that think they are resisting or defending is important enough to egregiously and deliberately violate democratic-centralism it is obviously something that must be taken seriously.

I hope that the aggrieved comrades will seriously consider the points which I want to make and give me a fair hearing. Because I think that if they do we will be a long way toward settling this current "contretemps" (Websters: "an inopportune and embarrassing occurrence"). I apologize for the length of this document, and I sincerely wish I did not have to spend the time and energy necessary to do it, particularly at this point in the press cycle. But it is vital to putting things back together to speak frankly to each other.

So what's up? It's hard to tell from the presentations the comrades made. Presumably now that they have gone ahead and published *1917 West* and announced their positions publicly in the IBT via the tape recorder they will also now finally be prepared to try to put together a coherent explanation of the motivation for their admitted breach of democratic-centralism so that we can have a serious discussion.

The comrades seem to feel that they have been victimized by an incipient totalitarian (or at least bureaucratic) regime in which I am the central figure. They imagine that all of the other IEC reps can somehow be whipped into line via a phone call from Toronto. Sometimes I have to admit that I wish this was the case, like when I get outvoted on bringing out the paper and then again on what our attitude to the events in Yugoslavia should be. It just happens that on both of these things Gerald, Jim and I were voting the same way. But in the long run we all have to learn to put up with the mistakes of our comrades, when they are in the majority. Of course this changes when it is necessary to split the organization, when the majority is so far off track that the only way to save the cadres of revolutionary Marxism is to break away and begin again. But this is not something that serious people do easily. First it is necessary to explore every possibility to correct the existing group before abandoning it.

Cde. Fred spoke on the tape of the BAPT having been under my "thumb" too long, etc. This genuinely surprises me because to my knowledge, besides the disagreements over *1917 West* our relations have been pretty amicable over the past couple of years. Certainly I have a peculiar way of exercising this control—for as anyone who checks my phone bill can see I probably spent less than an hour calling the Bay Area prior to this blow-up. I also did not send much in the way of orders or instructions over compuserve. Usually Gerald, and sometimes Fred, would call me. And I never recall them asking me to put my thumb on them.

To my knowledge Cde. Fred has not had any objections to our collaboration in his trade union work—either the very few and usually very minor changes proposed for *Militant Printer* (all of which he accepted without ever expressing any disagreement) or the considerations and suggestions that I made regarding the tricky tactical questions which arose last year in connection with the pensioners and the health care plan. As far as I know we had no significant disagreements over any of this. *Militant Printer* has always gone out pretty much as Fred wrote it and

I think I recall him indicating to me on occasion in the past that he generally appreciated the input.

Similarly the collaboration with Gerald has, to my knowledge, been pretty close and pretty amicable on the whole. I do not recall the IS ordering the BAPT to do anything much over the past few years. But I do recall plenty of discussion to work out a general tactical approach to the Panther regroupment, the united front work over the Iraq war, and the approach to the SL over a variety of questions. I also thought our discussions over the cop-watch united front were productive, and I am not aware that anyone felt that the IS letter on the united front, which we drafted in response to a request from both Fred and Gerald for input was out of line.

The only thing which I can recall Gerald and I having any really heated arguments over in the last year was whether he should complete the minutes of the German fusion conference. He initially stated that he would not bother as he felt they had been too critical of the first instalment he had sent. Under some understandable pressure from the German comrades I told him that it had been well over a year since the conference that he was being irresponsible to have taken so long. I also told him he should grow up, that he simply could not walk away from the assignment etc., etc. Eventually, after numerous reminders in the IS minutes and several heated phone calls, the minutes were finally completed and neither of us has mentioned it since. I certainly did not feel that there was any lasting antagonism arising from this.

On the question of attending the CPUSA conference last December which Gerald mentioned on the tapes: it is true that he had to argue with me that it was a priority to send people to Cleveland. Initially my response was that as we knew of no left wing in the CPUSA (as opposed to the Canadian CP where the Robertsonites had an agent and were doing work last year) and Cleveland was far away, that a trip was not a priority. Gerald argued that the CPUSA was important in the Bay Area, that we intersected them quite a bit out there and that some of them were beginning to look around, that we could afford to make the trip, etc. It took a call or two but he eventually brought me around to his way of thinking and with Jim and Cathy's agreement we ended up sending Dave to the conference. As far as I am concerned this is an example of the proper functioning of a leading collective. Not everybody is going to agree about everything from the beginning. The point is not so much who had what good idea first, or who dragged their feet about this or that (although that is all part of the record) but did the possibility exist to make a correction and was the right decision made in the end.

As far as I was aware, until a few weeks ago, there were no serious problems between Cdes. Fred and Gerald on the one hand and myself and the IS on the other. Perhaps there is something I am forgetting and the comrades will refresh my memory, but that is my recollection. So all I have to reply to is the points which the comrades made in a rather haphazard (and insulting) fashion on the tape.

On "Double Standards"

Cde. Riker seems to think that the BAPT has been the victim of some kind of "double standard." It has not. It would seem that comrades in BAPT who believe that this is a legitimate charge are not fully informed.

In the first place the BAPT is a local, and it is part of a North American section. It is not a section. Never in the whole tradition of our movement have locals had the status of national sections. No local in the SWP that I am aware of ever issued its own paper. Besides, Germany and New Zealand are very different places than North America, as anyone who has visited them knows. So it is no double standard for locals not to have the prerogatives of sections. Secondly, had the IS requested a proposal from either the PRG or GS regarding the project of a new press: costs, frequency, sales projections, format etc. they would have had exactly the same obligation to comply as the BAPT did. There has been no such need for a request because these comrades have kept us pretty fully informed regarding all their plans and projections for their journal.

As Bill commented in the 17 March meeting:

1) Campus Bolshevik has always been fully discussed with IS and in any case pre-dated fusion and was taken over a part of the fused group.

2) German Bolshevik has been undertaken on the basis of full consultation with discussion in the GS and adequate notification to the IS. The SpAD brochure was produced in full and detailed consultation with the IS/IEC and was agreed to as part of the fusion.

We are a tiny international propaganda group and we need to make sure that our slender resources are expended so as best to advance the work of the tendency as a whole. The IEC has the duty to oversee this, and the IS must act on its behalf. All monies of every local have always been the property of the group as a whole in the ET/BT and now the IBT. This is clearly understood, was explicitly part of both the 1990 fusions that created the IBT and has been present in every draft of the org rules so far. The idea that locals should have the right to unilaterally dispose of money from members and sympathizers without control of organization is Menshevik localism. All revenues, whether from contacts, ex-members or members are the property of the group as a whole. Likewise, all major expenditures (and \$836 US is a very major expenditure for us—particularly if it is multiplied by three per annum) are subject to the approval of the IS/IEC. There may well be better ways for us to spend the money.

We do not want a few comrades in Hamburg or Toronto buying a 4-color multi-lith press to put out a

brochure once a year while in Wellington we have a bigger group publishing a monthly paper on a gestetner. That should be A-B-C. Normal operating expenses (leaflets, phone, office supplies, rent) are of course the business of the local and normally the IS/IEC has better things to do than inquire about them, but in principle it has the right. What if we decide in Toronto to start renting some swanky big office with money that might better be spent paying for Bill to spend 6 months in the Bay Area or London? The work as a whole must be conducted on the basis of international priorities, not local ones. In the final analysis it must be the international leadership which makes such decisions. It is unusual in the Trotskyist movement to encounter conflicts between pursuing significant local opportunities and international ones—but the principle remains.

Of course it makes sense that if a local has a special campaign, or a special project of some sort then it may well want to try to tap contributions from sympathizers and supporters which are earmarked for such a project. In this case it would be wrong to spend the money on something else. But such campaigns and projects, and the special fund-raising to support them, are just as much subject to the approval of the leadership as the line carried in a leaflet or newsletter. Such a fund-raising project, had the branch decided it was necessary or appropriate, should rightly have been part of the proposal for launching a local press which the IS quite correctly asked for.

To bulwark his complaints about a "double standard," which seems to be an emotionally significant rationalization for ignoring the instructions of the elected leadership of our group, Fred goes back to Howard and Uschii's intemperate and incorrect declaration in 1987 that they were not prepared to abide by the decision of a majority of the BABT branch which had passed a motion regarding a trade union situation and Howard's intervention in it. This was certainly the wrong response from Howard. And Fred was right at the time to argue that this kind of response to the organization, if generalized, makes it impossible to move forward.

So why now in demanding "equal rights" for BABT does he invoke this error which he fought against at the time as his precedent? It makes no sense. How can you be for "democratic centralism"—indeed consider yourself something of an expert on the question and deliver lectures on the disastrous consequences which can result from defiance of the decisions of the majority, and then turn around and demand an "equal right" to do the same thing when you think you may be in a minority. No one has a right to defy the decision of the democratically elected leadership of our group. Every member has a perfect right to question, criticize or denounce their actions or inaction about anything, within the proper channels. Every member has a right to lobby IEC members to overturn the decisions of the IS. Every member has a right to argue for a different leadership at our next conference. But no one has a "right" to break discipline—not in 1987 and not in 1992. There is no "double standard": Howard was wrong to declare autonomy in 1987 just as Fred and Gerald are wrong today. Howard has not persisted in nor generalized his error. The BT had a conference in 1987. Fred moved motions reasserting the supremacy of the collective over the individual, and of the leadership over minorities who disagree. There was a discussion, Fred's motions passed. We have had no repetition, until now, of this problem. So we moved on.

If we are to fail, as an organization, to make it clear to Cde. Fred and anyone else who wants to establish their own "right" to resist Robertsonite commandism in the IBT by picking and choosing which of the decisions of the group they are bound by then we are on the road to consolidating a centrist swamp—not a Bolshevik international. In the long gone and unlamented Class Struggle League in the early 1970s each local had "autonomy"—one branch supported cops in unions and another opposed them. It made them a laughing stock and hastened their disappearance. This kind of "discipline" has always been the rule of thumb in the USec. It was how the IC operated (at least among the big boys).

Enunciating the "theory" of SWP autonomy from any kind of centralized control, as he did in the Cochran fight (see Speeches to the Party) was perhaps the worst thing James P. Cannon made after he came over to Trotskyism. Had he opted to fight Pablo politically, instead of declaring national autonomy from the international, we might be in a very different situation today. Leninists abide by discipline not because they agree with every decision but because they understand that to raise the consciousness of the precious cadres who constitute the vanguard it is sometimes necessary to carry out mistaken policies, so that the group can at least learn from the experience and the correct policy can win out in the future.

It should be recalled for those comrades who were not around at the time that Howard's declaration of "autonomy" came in the midst of a hot strike on the waterfront in which he played an absolutely pivotal role. Comrades had differing appreciations of the prospects of the strike but that much was agreed to. He was under enormous personal and political pressure, and there had been an ugly, often personalist and demoralizing semi-factional struggle underway in the branch for months which played into this. But even in such situations the instruction of the majority of the branch must bind comrades, even when the majority is mistaken. In this concrete case the instruction to Howard was, given the circumstances, in my opinion insufficiently flexible. But the response of openly announcing an intent to defy it was not a good one, and not one that can be tolerated for long by a serious organization. It should not be seen as a precedent for anyone.

At the time of the BT's 1987 conference Fred wrote a document entitled "Democratic Centralism: The Question of Questions" in which he attempted to explain why this kind of act is incompatible with building a serious revolutionary organization. Today he huffs and puffs that if he too does not get a license to defy the

decisions of the majority then he is a victim of a "double standard." But where there are two weights there must be two measures. Comrade Riker's violation of discipline (with active support from Smith) was clearly premeditated, it took place over a period of months, in a situation which was not, as far as anyone outside BABT knew, characterized by great tension and certainly not in the context of any urgent class struggle.

Comrade Riker, with cde. Smith, has engaged in a more or less thought out, deliberate decision to defy the duly elected bodies over a minimal and entirely appropriate request for information and discussion.

So it would be a double standard if we do not advise all comrades and perhaps particularly comrade Riker, who since the 1987 conference apparently changed his mind about majority rule, know that this kind of wilful, indisciplined, Menshevik behavior of circumventing proper procedures and then presenting "fait accompli" with threats of splits, is unacceptable. The motion which cde. Fred included at the end of his 1987 document stated clearly:

"That this organization has the exclusive right to control the political activities of its members. This certainly includes their activities in the trade unions.... We will not tolerate a freelancing, do-your-own-thing attitude toward this work. We are serious revolutionaries and expect to be in full control of our members activities in the trade unions as in any other area of work...."

This motion, as I recall, was passed by the 1987 BT conference. To give cde. Riker his due he has bent over to carefully adhere to the proper procedure in his trade union work, with, I would hope he would agree, generally positive results. As the motion states this control by the whole over the part is not exclusive to trade union work—it applies to all work, including the activities of every branch.

The departure from this norm in the BABT in connection with *1917 West* had brought in its wake a raft of semi-Menshevik proposals regarding the primacy of branch autonomy and branch control of money etc. Cde. Smith, in an angry moment during our March 8 phone conversation, told me that I had been a "fool" to go along with the IEC majority decision to postpone *1917*.

The grievances which loom so large in the minds of the speech-makers in BABT are necessary in order to give themselves the impression that they are fighting a good fight against an all-intrusive Robertsonite leadership which is stifling the initiative of the comrades. But comrades, where is the evidence for such a conception? It is not in the IS intervention to guide the work around the Iraq conflict in 1990. It is not in the correspondence with Turner regarding questions which he raised over our position on the August coup. It is not in the response to the anti-cop united front argument last December. It is not in fact in any important area of what has been a usually fruitful collaboration. There is no pattern of bureaucratic abuse or bureaucratic centralism. There is an example of bureaucratism—by Riker and Smith in refusing to discuss and "stonewalling" perfectly reasonable requests, and then proceeding to produce a "fait accompli" even behind the backs of half the BABT branch.

We must come out of this discussion with a renewed understanding by all comrades that democratic centralism, the question of our collective responsibility to each other to abide by a common discipline, is the precondition for everything else and in that sense is indeed the "question of questions." The alternative will only take us into the swamp.

On "Changing the Goal Posts"

When Gerald called me on March 8th, he was very worked up and somewhat vitriolic. But we did manage to go through the development of the whole project with very substantial agreement as to the sequence of events. In the present context it seems to me important to go over and to try to reconstruct in some detail the course of the discussions, because a lot of the misconceptions in the BABT seem to stem from a mistaken understanding of exactly what went on.

1. *1917 West* was originally talked about last fall as equivalent to the 1960s Spartacist West—a leaflet on local issues with a masthead.

2. In our 8 March conversation, Gerald told me that this conception began to change in December after the IEC voted to postpone the newspaper in favor of a discussion on Yugoslavia (a discussion in which the BABT comrades played virtually no part). Gerald called after the IEC decision to discuss things in the Bay Area, as he was in the habit of doing every week or two. We talked, on this occasion I think, about the cop-watch united front and various other things. He also mentioned to me that they were thinking that they needed to publish something on the CPUSA split and that they wanted to produce a *1917 West* with a few articles in it. I told him that in principle I did not have a problem doing more than one or two articles, but that they should be of specific Bay Area interest and that we would have to check everything prior to publication. I also asked that he write a short letter outlining the proposal so that everyone would know what was planned. Gerald was reluctant to do so and pointed out that he was using his own money to phone and that he was not into writing things.

3. Gerald called later in December, some time around Xmas, and said that they wanted to add another article or two (which he mentioned) and that the issue would have to be of expanded length. Some of the proposed items had already been published and so would not be a problem (an excerpt from *Militant Printer* and the text of

Drew's remarks to the RTT). I once again asked him to briefly outline plans for costs, contents and timetabling in a letter, particularly as the concept seemed to be growing, but still remained rather vague. My "agreement," which subsequently acquired the status of "goal posts" was along the lines of "yeah, yeah, that's possible—but send us a letter and let us see what exactly you're proposing." This was apparently misinterpreted by Gerald, who presented it to the BABT branch as a firm agreement with the IS. But my repeated request for a written summary of the project were apparently never mentioned to the branch.

During this call Gerald also raised the possibility of having it offset. I balked at this and said xerox was the way to go because the costs were much more flexible and that they could produce 100 or so in the same format as *Campus Bolshevik* for much less than it cost to print an offset edition. If they sold out then it would be possible to print more using the money from sales to partially offset the next production. And so on. At the end of it we would not be left with a huge stack of unsold papers. (For a detailed calculation see Appendix no. 1 at the end of this document.)

All of this should have been discussed and written proposals and (if necessary) counter-proposals should have been made. The question of where we spend our money and what we raise it for, like what campaigns we undertake, is a political question which goes beyond the right of a single local to decide, although of course the input and suggestions on such matters of local comrades is vital.

I asked Gerald about recent sales figures for 1917 and said that I doubted that they would end up selling as many as that. Gerald did not know of any figures, but said that we sold several hundred although for No. 11 they were lower than previously. He seemed to agree with the more flexible xerox proposal. In our March 8 conversation Gerald said that I had convinced him to go with xerox, but when he took it to the local Fred won a majority for offset and Gerald changed his mind as well.

4. Gerald called back in early January. We discussed once again the question of offset vs. xerox, and I discovered that Gerald had changed his mind on the question since I had last talked to him. As well as wanting to make it offset, he said that they also wanted to run an ad in *Revolutionary History*. I said that the project was getting overblown and that I did not want to invest \$1000 in offsetting it, and that, as it was to be a local paper full of things of specific interest in BABT, as far as I was concerned we definitely did not want to advertise in *RH*. 1917 is our main journal and that is what we want to push internationally.

In this call, (or perhaps it was the previous one around Christmas) in response to Gerald's objection that a pre-set subsidy as I was proposing for xerox might limit the number of papers below the sales potential I suggested that we could consider raising the subsidy, if sales were better than anticipated. I also suggested that the difference, and perhaps the whole subsidy, could very likely be covered by hitting up the low or non-paying periphery of Mensheviks like Jack and some of the people who had volunteered to write the drafts and were apparently showing interest in the project. I never suggested that long-time contacts who have given us serious money historically like Mike A. and Vince should have their donations automatically assigned to this experiment. Nor did I suggest or agree to a special fund-raising campaign prior to publication. Again I asked Gerald to put his thoughts in writing as the contents and plans were still seemed rather vague. Besides, while I was against offset, there was no definite decision made. Gerald again failed to promise anything, on the grounds that he was too busy. I said that all I had in mind was a simple one-page letter, but I could not get him to make a definite commitment.

A week or so after that, still having received nothing firm on the whole project, we had an IS meeting in which we discussed 1917 West. At this point I had been informally requesting a written proposal for over a month without result. In January the IS, in minutes published and circulated to every IEC member including cde. Gerald, outlined some guidelines and asked for a written proposal from the BABT. We thought that our framework was reasonable, but were open to discussing any aspect of it with the comrades if they wished to do so. If the outcome of such discussions were not satisfactory the comrades could have appealed to the IEC, where Gerald has just as many votes as I do. But instead of replying to our request for a proposal, which Fred and Gerald decided to simply ignore, the request itself was presented to the BABT branch, who were not fully informed as to the previous conversations, as "moving the goalposts" and even more bizarrely interpreted by Fred as an attempt to scuttle the whole project.

It is worth noting that in Gerald's opening remarks in the 17 March local meeting he mentioned that in 1987, when we were not getting any reports from Uschii in Hamburg, he and Fred repeatedly requested that I do something about it. And he specifically mentions that they made these requests in writing so there would be a record of it. So they know how things should be done. And they can write letters, if they feel like it. Why then were they so reluctant—from December when they first began to develop the idea of this thing going beyond a masthead on a leaflet to March when they printed it—to put down their ideas in writing? Was it because they thought it better that we did not know exactly what was planned? Or did they really think, as Fred seems to suggest in his 17 March remarks, that complying with such a request would be the first step toward Robertsonian totalitarianism?

The story from this point on is pretty much covered in Comrade Bill's letter on "Crisis in the Bay Area" of 8 March.

I never agreed to anything regarding 1917 West with Gerald except that in principle I considered the

proposals he was making to be within the realm of possibility. I repeatedly asked for a written proposal, because Gerald's ideas on the thing seemed so nebulous and the specifics were clearly changing from week to week. I constantly reiterated that any propaganda had to be cleared politically before publication—this at least seems to have gotten through. But I also told him that the proposal had to be balanced against the other priorities of group as a whole in terms of money, time and comrade hours. I also repeatedly told him that as far as I was concerned the scope of the publication should be restricted to issues of particular import to the Bay Area.

In late January Gerald sent out a bunch of articles asking for them to be approved in 48 hours. This gave the impression of being a bit of an end-run around any kind of discussion outside the branch. IEC members from every section, as well as the IS, were distressed with this procedure and made it clear that this deadline was out of the question. We also turned around the reply to the ICL in less than 48 hours so that it could be used as a leaflet at an SL event. (This piece was in my view the best item in the whole project, well-written and politically cogent. It needed very little amendment.)

The only other thing that I would note in this chronology is that on 8 March in his conversation with me Gerald agreed, finally after a lot of argument, that he would send out some kind of proposal. He also stated that he wanted the IEC to vote it up or down within 48 hours. I do not know what transpired after that but I do know that even that kind of "proposal" was never sent, and that the paper was printed without even consulting all the members of the BABT—presumably to avoid the possibility of someone trying to spoil the plan for a "fait accompli."

So much for "changing the goal posts" a false allegation which is repeated several times in the 17 March BABT meeting. It is clear from the tape that the BABT was not fully or properly informed as to the consultations that took place. It should also be noted that Gerald's conversations with me had the character of informal discussion between two IEC members. He told me what he thought and I gave him my immediate reactions. The whole nature of the project seemed to be shifting and changing and I repeatedly asked for something in writing so that it could be discussed in the leadership. Gerald apparently did not mention this "goalpost" to his comrades in the BABT. It certainly never changed. The only real "goalposts" in the whole business as far as I am concerned were contained in the proposals in the IS minutes and the subsequent instructions for them to be honored.

The IS made its formal request in mid-January. Two months later the paper appeared and yet in the meeting Fred has the nerve to claim that they did not write a proposal because of the danger that any discussion would hold up the paper! You see, explains Fred, if we wrote a proposal to the evil bureaucrats in the IS, Tom will tie us up with discussions. Better to simply go ahead, ignore the IS/IEC and then see what they do. This behavior is unworthy of a Leninist.

The BABT comrades who have been told to be on the look-out for "double standards" should also note that whereas Gerald felt free to change his opinion on things from week to week, and did not feel bound by any informal agreement we reached, (for example on offset vs. xerox), his interpretation of my equally off-the-cuff remarks, made without any discussion with any other comrade and without even any confirmation or agreement from me are supposed to be taken as the binding and definitive positions of the whole IS/IEC.

Why did the BABT leadership refuse to discuss their plans and insist on a "fait accompli"? Why, if Fred and Gerald thought the IS would not agree to their proposals did they not prepare to appeal to the IEC? Because, according to Fred, he estimated that the IEC might not go along with him. That is all. So Fred's idea of democratic centralism and majority rule boils down to this: it is the "question of questions" when Fred gets his way. When he thinks he may be outvoted democratic centralism becomes something that can only be safeguarded by ignoring it. Instead of putting any definite ideas on paper which could be considered and discussed and voted up or down, Fred and Gerald thought it best to just go ahead as they saw fit. And then, to cover the tracks, they let fly with some harsh words about "Robertsonite" commandism.

Overediting from Toronto—Truth is Concrete

Gerald and Fred have their own ideas about what kind of press we should have. They wrote a number of documents about these ideas and had lots of time at two conferences to argue for them. On both occasions their conceptions were rejected by a majority of the organization.

One grievance which they raise (with plenty of theatrics and name-calling) involves the supposed over-editing of the texts. Comrades, if you can, please provide us with some concrete examples. Which texts were spoiled by over-editing? In case they are not available in the Bay Area I have the original submissions and the final versions and I am very curious as to exactly what changes you think were mistaken. What articles were not improved? Which ones were better in the original? It is time to put up or shut up. It is time for the comrades to give us some examples of what precisely they are talking about.

I would hope that the comrades are as embarrassed as we are that they spelled the name of their own group incorrectly in a headline on the directory box, not to mention the various misspellings in the captions and the computer codings left in the copy. We also note that the quotation from the Transitional Program about being "true in little things as in big ones" is misquoted. This was originally misquoted on the masthead of 1917. When we re-did the masthead in Toronto for No. 6 we proofed the quote and corrected it. Please check and correct. This material is

among that which the IS never got a chance to look at. Perhaps it would have been better if we had.

There is a reason why newspapers use editors and copy editors. In general articles should receive editorial correction and improvement in inverse proportion to how good the drafts are. Of course there will be differences of opinion. Sometimes the original might be superior to the edited version. If that happens very often the editor should be switched. But we have to deal with the general character of the process. The bottom line is: are the articles better or worse after editing? I have appended the original and the edited draft of the Cuba article to the end of this document. Comrades can draw their own conclusions on that one. If the comrades agree with the edit on this one I am quite prepared to discuss any other article—I present the Cuba article as an example, and as evidence that the IS was in fact doing its job. The article as presented had too many political/factual errors to be printable. Are the changes and the explanatory note accompanying them an example of the “Robertson commandism” that some comrades seem to imagine they are courageously standing up to?

Open Political Struggle—the Only Way Forward

Fred and Gerald have a responsibility to put their thoughts, their criticisms and their insights down on paper and to try to make a convincing argument for why they think it was correct to defy the properly elected political leadership (of which Gerald is a member and for which Fred refused to stand). Let all the comrades know what it is you are objecting to. Expose the myriad sins of the all-powerful IS as it starts down the path of Healy/Robertson!

Why restrict yourselves to histrionics in the BABT local meetings? Could it be because you have an unpleasant premonition that if you are to put your grievances and rationalizations on paper for your comrades to see, you will end up with something that is not very convincing? I think that when you see what you have written it may cause you to rethink the whole thing. I hope so. I have confidence that when comrades see the arguments, and study the proofs of both sides in this dispute they will draw the correct conclusions. I think that this will also include those in the BABT who have thus far heard a great deal from one side and very little from the other and who seem to have had the mistaken impression that the “moving goal posts” etc. is an undisputed matter of fact, rather than a tendentious invention.

If comrades are tired from the strain of political life in this difficult period, or demoralized by it, they should not waste their time and energy trying to find scapegoats. If comrades feel that they cannot go on they should not spend their time trying to poke holes in the bottom of our boat. For in damaging the IBT, which is a very weak and fragile vessel, they damage the most important political work they have done in their lives.

If there is a disagreement it should be brought forth and discussed. If there are problems they should be raised. But it is a mistake to start from the presumption that the organization is so hopelessly bureaucratized that trying to correct perceived errors and abuses through the proper channels is hopeless. This mistake is compounded by proceeding to flail out wildly, and hurl insults and unsubstantiated charges around, while deliberately violating the most basic rules of democratic centralism.

Fred at least should not try to evade his political responsibility to participate in sorting out this situation with the claim that he cannot write. His 1987 piece entitled “The Struggle for a Democratic Centralist Organization,” an apt quotation from which appears at the top of this document, ran to a well-written 18 pages. In it Cde. Riker noted that he has “spoken and written extensively on the subject” of “the humane application of democratic centralism.” It is time once again for Cde. Riker to take up his pen and address the question.

I hope that we are not presented with the suggestion that this whole thing is not worth writing about. These questions are ones which the comrades apparently felt strongly enough about to break discipline. It is evident from the tape that they are emotionally quite committed to some of their allegations. We must try to make the process of sorting out their complaints into a learning experience for the whole tendency so that, whatever the outcome, we will emerge from this discussion as a more homogenous and politically strengthened organization.

So have the courage of your convictions. Put your ideas, your arguments, your examples down on paper and let your comrades study them. That is the only way that we can cut through the personalism and hysterics and get to the bottom of all this.

Bolshevik Greetings,
Riley
3/29/92

Just a Few Corrections

Comrade Riley in his thirty-six page document(!) "(Contretemps, Democratic Centralism and 1917W)" is obviously attempting to drag me into an extended literary discussion of the question of 1917W and whether or not BABT had the right to publish it without a nod from Toronto. It is not to be.

However, let's get a few of the facts straight:

1. Riker had nothing whatever to do with conceiving 1917W. It was the BABT Local Exec's project of which I only learned after the major decisions were made.

2. Smith was chosen to edit the first edition and he is the resident IEC member. He decided to go to press without sending a formal proposal. I supported that decision then, and support it now, because (as is clear from Riley's 36-page document) the ensuing "discussion" would have tied up the project for months, perhaps permanently.

3. Riley's contention that we are part of some "North American Section" is total hogwash (When was that decided? What was the vote? Where did it take place?).

We are part of an international tendency which includes locals in Berlin, Hamburg, Wellington, Toronto and the Bay Area. The Berlin/Hamburg locals negotiated certain local rights for themselves at the BT/GIVI fusion conference. We think that is fine, all we want is the same rights everyone else enjoys. To speak of a separate German, New Zealand or North American "Section" of 10 or 20 people is ludicrous and Riley knows it.

4. For years Riley has contended (beginning with the aborted 1988 T&P document) that what occurred during the fight over democratic centralism in this local was nothing but "contretemps". No politics, just a straight up cat-fight. Suddenly he now sees a parallel between events then and now. Well, that's progress of a sort, I suppose.

But, let's be clear: I did not think and do not think the IS had the authority to prevent BABT from publishing 1917W (no more than it had the authority to prevent the publication of Campus Bolshevik). I, for one, am as committed to democratic centralist functioning as I was in 1987 and will certainly carry out any legitimate decision by any body of this organization. But how about a little less B.S.

It is time to view things in their proper perspective. We now have a publication in Toronto which is our international publication and is written to reflect our international tasks and a publication in the Bay Area which is more local in scope and written for a somewhat different audience. Let's move on.

We are open to printing 1917W the cheapest way we can, as long as it has a union label and looks reasonably presentable. We are willing to submit any article for 1917W to the Ed Board for review of its political line. If they can suggest changes that make the article more readable or find grammatical, punctuation or syntax errors, well, of course we interested.

Instead of yammering interminably about events in the past, let's put the past behind us and begin to work together to build an organization (that, after all, is the purpose of 1917W). A long, nasty fight over this issue is in no one's interest and can only slow us down.

CG's
Riker
3/30/92

Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency

Tasks and Perspectives—April 1992

(Excerpt)

The Need For *1917 West*

The first issue of *1917 West* has already proved to be an important tool in pushing the work of the BAPT ahead. The article on ICECUBE enabled us to intervene with a specific focus that we probably would not have had with *1917*. Recently contact J., Stone and Boyd sold twenty *West* journals on the basis of the ICECUBE article at a public forum called the "Politics of Rap" in Oakland. They were all sold to young black kids who had come to hear a local rap disk jockey expound on the politics of rap. J. was extremely pleased with the sale and offered to do more sales. The point being that *1917 West* has great potential to aid our real work as well as give us an opening into milieus that we might not otherwise have. The idea behind *West* is to aid our recruitment by having a regular propaganda tool with articles more specifically focussed on our local work.

The important task before us now, given the recent internal controversy, is to present the rest of the tendency a written proposal as to the size and scope of this propaganda effort.

From the inception of this idea we have envisioned flexibility in the size, format and frequency of the journal. Early on the consensus was that the effort could be anything from a one page (two-sided) leaflet to a sixteen pages production. The first issue was unexpectedly large. The size, format, and frequency depend on a complexity of other things such as time, personnel, money, and the internal editorial processes. At present there is still a consensus for retaining flexibility in terms of size. Initially we project that we will produce no less than two issues of the journal annually. Greater frequency should be determined by growth, sales, available money as well as the overall prospects of the tendency as a whole.

The premiere issue cost approximately \$830.00 because it was offset at a union printer with a first run of 1,000. A second issue of that size and quality could easily be accomplished if the BAPT were able to rely on the donations from its regular sustaining supporters. Comrade Zimmerman has offered to sustain the journal at the rate of \$50.00 per month (\$600/yr) for an indefinite period of time. This does not include other donations from our periphery totalling over \$2,000 per year (not including Zimmerman's donation). With our current level of donations we project that we would need something less than 100% of these non-member funds, thus leaving, an as yet undetermined, percentage of monies for the international treasury. For the time being, we propose that the financial viability of *1917 West* be determined by the BAPT's ability to raise the overwhelming majority of production monies from our supporters. Should non-member donations become significantly reduced in the future, we would expect some modest infusion of funds from local sp's along with a scaling back on size and print run of the journal. We hold open the possibility that future issue(s) may need to be xeroxed and reproduced in smaller amounts.

Sales will also be a crucial test of the journal's viability. To date we have sold approximately 150 of the journals and future sales seem likely to be good as well. For the most part these were street/event sales. They are also being stocked in bookstores alongside *1917*. This rate of sales obviously presents effective competition between our international *1917* journal and our *West* magazine. This, however, is the kind of pleasant problem we should look towards managing rather than avoiding or eliminating. *West* is simply more specifically geared to help us recruit and grow in the Bay Area, thus advancing the international tendency as a whole.

The third important matter is the editorial process. We understand and fully appreciate the importance of not overburdening our already small *1917* editorial staff. At the present rate of production of *1917* and the projected rate of *1917 West* we do not see any reason why both would have to be in production at the same time. We propose that we have an understood arrangement with the international editorial board that the production of these two journals be alternated. If this agreement were adhered to, we see no reason why there should be any unreasonable demands on turn-around of copy between the BAPT and the *1917* editorial board.

1917-Finances—Letter from Riker to Nason—5/5/92

FROM: Riker
TO: Nason
SUBJECT: 1917—Finances
COPIES: All IEC
Dear Cathy,

I know you are in the middle of moving your household and everything is chaos, but I have been assigned by BABT to bring up the question of how we are going to pay for the printing of 1917, something I neglected to do earlier.

In the beginning of March we here had about \$5,000 in the local treasury. Since then, besides the ordinary expenses of running the local, we have had some extraordinary expenses. For example, it cost BABT about \$1,000 to subsidize Bill's plane fare and to pay him a stipend while he was here. In addition I've paid off a long-standing debt owed by the organization to two former treasurers which totaled \$489.00 (see accompanying financial breakdown).

Our bank balance is now at about \$3,200 and if, as anticipated, the cost of printing and shipping 1917 No. 11 is between \$1,500 and \$1,600, paying it will just about halve our remaining funds. We have also committed ourselves to pay half of the plane fare for whatever comrade it is that will go to the Fete from BABT. That will be another \$350-400.

My understanding from Henning's April 27th letter is that the Germans will pay DM500 toward the cost of production and, given their relative poverty and the fact that they are producing *Bolshevik* from local funds.

On the other hand, the PRG, the NY comrades and TBT haven't any extraordinary expenses in quite some time and it seems reasonable that they take responsibility for at least some of the expense of producing 1917.

I would like to hear something from you relatively soon on this question as the magazine is due to be picked up from the printer on Wednesday, May 6th. I would also like to hear whatever other comrades in the leadership have to contribute as well.

Thanks and sorry once again to bother you when you are up to your ears on furniture and moving boxes.

CG's
Riker
BABT Treasurer

Letter from Riker to Nason—5/7/92

FROM: Riker
TO: Nason
SUBJECT: 1917 — Finances
COPIES: IS/IEC
Dear Comrades:

Has Compuserve been seized by Martian invaders? Has the entire organization caught AIDS and died? One would think so from the deafening silence since I sent the attached letter on May 2 (the letter was mistakenly dated May 5).

I made the effort to call Neal in TBT and asked him to have Paul download the letter and hand deliver it to Nason because I know she is in the middle of moving her household. Taking a minute to make a telephone call and leave a message on my phone machine or having Paul send something down on Compuserve is not much of an imposition, is it?

I would like to hear something from someone on this subject ASAP.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this.

CG's
Riker

1917 West & Democratic Centralism

This letter is an attempt to clarify the issues related to the dispute over the production of *1917 West*.

First of all, in regard to comrade Logan's statement (during one of the BABT meetings at which this issue was discussed) which insinuated that Smith is the BABT leader. Everyone should know that just prior to comrade Logan's arrival in early March the BABT branch dissolved its Local Executive committee of three (which consisted of myself and comrades Trent and Smith) since comrade Riker remained as the fourth and only other member of the branch. There is no one or two leader(s) in the BABT who commands any respect or allegiance more than another. This may be part of our problem in a certain way; we are essentially a conspiracy of equals, four comrades who have significant, though varying, political abilities and experience under their belts.

Of course, we do not seek to remain such a "conspiracy." We work for the day when we can reconstitute a more precise division of leadership based on growth. Some comrades may lead or influence others on certain matters but those roles of influence are quite fluid. In fact, comrade Smith was more often than not a minority of one on the Local Exec. when infrequent differences came to a vote.

There is no doubt, however, that comrades Smith and Riker have, since prior to the '89 conference in Toronto, led the fight on the press question. They have felt their differences the most keenly and articulated them most frequently. It is therefore, no surprise that they were the principal characters in this latest dispute on press matters.

Over the years, we have come to agree with them that decreasing prospects for regroupment in the Bay Area means that we need more popular content in our propaganda that more accurately reflects our day to day work. However, we have never seen this as counterposed to the necessity of a more theoretical journal such as *1917* which can still play a useful role in a regroupment perspective.

We have also come to agree with them on the need to have an editorial process that encourages the growth of our writing pool as opposed to waiting until we recruit good writers.

Request for a Written Proposal

The most important bottom-line in this dispute is the need to recognize and reaffirm the necessity of democratic-centralist functioning. It is our understanding that comrades Smith and Riker have yet to respond to the IS's request for a written proposal for *1917 West*; to date they have not shown either of us anything that would satisfy that request. This is clearly a violation of democratic-centralism. It was not unreasonable for the IS to make such a request given the size and potential cost of the project.

Comrades Riker and Smith have alleged a double-standard in this request from the IS because the same was not requested from GS for publication of *Bolshevik*. We cannot make a determination at this point since we have not seen the relevant communications. However, whether or not a double-standard was applied to BABT, the IS's request should have been responded to. There are better ways of addressing double-standards. We await response to our letter (June 28, 1992) requesting communications which the IS indicates sufficed for written proposal for *Bolshevik*.

We should have been more vigilant in making sure that the IS got such a proposal. We argued for and were left with the understanding that Smith would make an appeal to the EC. Apparently, Smith and Riker were dissatisfied with the way subsequent phone calls to other EC members went and they decided to make a dash for the printers and instead of making an internal political fight. Neither of us knew that comrades Riker and Smith had gone to the printer until the night comrade Logan arrived for his Bay Area visit.

We are not a federated organization. IBT leadership had an obligation to "get a handle" on the parameters (especially the financial aspect) of any project that anticipates expenditure of the kind of monies BABT proposed for *1917 West*. They properly raised objections and suggestions for a project that seemed to grow in size and cost as time went by.

As communists we also seek to share our wealth internationally.

BABT is probably the wealthiest branch in the tendency. It has a communist responsibility to enter into collaborative discussions with leadership concerning expenditure of large amounts of money as we were (and are) proposing to make. On the other hand, as a flagship local with a rich political milieu in which to intervene, our propaganda tasks are also greater than, for example, those of NYBT or TBT.

Underlying Issues in the Fight

The origins of this press dispute lay many years back over the question of what orientation our journal should have. But

Confusion over two fundamental premises aggravated this organizational fray. 1) What organizational monies (member sp's as well as donations) may branches dispose of 2) The rights of branches to produce propaganda in the format of their choice.

1. Use of Locally Raised Monies

Many comrades may not be aware of old but formally valid conference motions which impinge on this matter of local budgets. We never have had the organizational size or capacity to implement the transfer of funds required by Riley's 1984 conference motion no. 10 (which endorsed financial procedures in cde. Zimmerman's document). This motion stated that "any money left over at the end of the month in a local in excess of \$100.00 should be sent to the organizational account." However, there is no organizational account extant. Only the Cleveland External Tendency (CET), when it existed from April '83 to September '86, ever transferred any monies to other branches.

CET regularly kept only \$100.00 and forwarded all other monies to BAET or possibly TET). Other than that, and until NYBT was established, there was never any reason to transfer monies between the only two existing North American branches, except on an as needed basis for large expenses (e.g. such as the printing of 1917). And this is the way we have functioned even with the addition of our branches in Germany and New Zealand.

At no time since the founding of our tendency have branches been required to submit budgets for local work or have them approved by any organizational body. Every branch has been allowed, for all intents and purposes, to determine its own expenditures of money for propaganda and other uses. In other words, the Riley/Zimmerman conference motion has essentially been a dead-letter since 1986 when CET was liquidated. Our financial guidelines remain seriously out of date. For instance, they still reflect an organizational account in Cleveland; a motion by a long ago departed comrade Cranston. Riley/Zimmerman motion no.10 also indicates that locals are being budgeted and sent money by "the organizational treasurer."

This situation with our financial rules and guidelines, however, does not mitigate the right of international leadership to exercise its authority over branch money matters.

For various reasons, we have not gotten around to finalizing our organizational or financial rules and guidelines. Perhaps, now the IS/IEC will recognize the necessity of doing this. My recollection is that the internal discussion on these matters was interrupted by the Soviet coup and subsequent internal debates. I know that many comrades submitted suggestions and amendments to the proposed IS organizational guidelines. With 1917 No.11 out on the streets the IS should move to resolve the outstanding question of financial and organizational rules and guidelines.

Until they do so, the IS/IEC is essentially "freelancing" financial rules as a substitute for a set that is determined by a conference. The results will continue to cause confusion.

2. Locally Produced Propaganda

It seems to me that it is only wise and organizationally useful that locals be allowed to service their areas and supporters by plowing back into local work some of the money they raise. The BABT operates in a large and rich political environment which requires propagandistic interventions beyond locally produced leaflets. Even Dov's RTT, one of the smallest ORO's around, has produced no less than five periodicals (none under 40 pages) in the past two years, although the frequency has decreased since the RTT's split from the LRCI.

We must strive to compete in order to look serious and viable to subjectively revolutionary elements we wish to recruit. We have the talent and the desire to produce a journal that will compete with those of the OROs. The need for local propaganda is all the more necessary given that (despite apparent best efforts) 1917 is now an annual publication.

It does not appear that there is sufficient appreciation on the part of the editorial board and EC for the kind of pressure this

situation places on our local. We desperately need to produce some regular and substantial commentary/analysis on local and national events. No serious communist leadership should allow such a vacuum of propaganda to exist, if it is serious about making a revolution.

Additionally, we have just begun to execute a very complex political maneuver with our COP-WATCH perspective. With this entry/united front work, we intersect a large milieu of different political activists over a broad spectrum. A regular and substantial propaganda intervention is a must if we are to recruit from this effort. For instance, over thirty people (eight of whom were COPWATCHers) attended a class given by cde. Smith at the COPWATCH meeting house this past Friday, June 19th. Any subjectively revolutionary person would have serious questions about any group of our size that cannot find a way to produce a regular journal. The lack of regular propaganda raises unnecessary doubts about our abilities.

Thirdly, but no less important, we have a significant periphery of our own that eagerly awaits our propaganda. They know all too well the critical importance of regular and substantial revolutionary commentary. They eagerly received our first issue of 1917 West. This is critical to keeping a periphery of regular supporters and financial contributors. 1917 West No.1 has already showcased our trade union work in M-1 and we plan on doing so again in issue No.2. 1917 West will be a way to advertise our local work and a vehicle for intervening against opponent groups (see articles on CP,RCP and ICL).

It has **also** been a way to speak to black youth in a way that is not really suitable for 1917. We now have a very politically "hot" article to approach black youth who may be considering revolutionary politics. We have sold extremely **well**, with the help of our youthful black contact J., at events attended by black youth. Comrades outside of the U.S. may not realize that black "rap" music is really the only politically oriented youth music currently on the **market**. Politically oriented white youth music faded with the onslaught of the '70's "me" decade and the '80's yuppie **phenomenon**.

A **propaganda** group's strength, aside from internal organizational and programmatic cohesion, flows from its ability to **intervene** with its propaganda in the events of the day. Presuming the first two factors, we figure little without the last.

The **key** question is just how much of the locally raised monies should be kept for local use. Our financial rules and the discussions about them have never dealt with the kind of large contributions that BABT is now receiving (which is approaching \$3,000 annually). Comrades should not forget that it was a \$600.00 dollar donation, solicited by Smith from Mike A., specifically for 1917 West, that gave us the notion that we could afford a 24 page offset production. In light of our regular monthly balance in the thousands of dollars and in view of 1917's decreasing frequency, we deem our production of 1917 West as an extremely high priority. We hope to convince the rest of the tendency of this position.

We can negotiate a working arrangement for 1917 West expenses, but this should not substitute for an understanding (some rules and guidelines) which state very specifically a formula for determining what monies may be kept for local use.

On Production of 1917 West

All points should now have our local Tasks and Perspectives in which we make an initial proposal about the production and financing of 1917 West. We believe that we have properly and very algebraically dealt with the matters of financing and production.

We prefer to put out an offset production but it is possible to produce in zexored form with a union bug. Riker was not aware that a printer in San Francisco does xeroxing with a union bug.

Size (i.e. the number of pages) should be strictly a local decision, though we recognize that the potential for editorial delays grows with increased size. We also agree that negotiations and, in the case of disagreement, votes should be taken on the subject matter of articles. This, of course, holds true for wording and content. Comrades Riley and Jim C. have stated that they requested specific wording changes for the Ice Cube article that were not included in the final version.

We would only add that articles that broach new theoretical ground or contain new line (e.g. Sendero Luminoso/PCP) would generally be reserved for 1917.

We seek to avoid any such problems or concerns in the future. We will scrupulously hold to the agreement that higher elected bodies may have final decision over any articles. There should be no surprises for anyone when the final printed issue is received.

On the Use of Epithets

Comrades Riker and Smith unnecessarily injected this dispute with emotionalism by using hostile descriptions and politically charged epithets (e.g. "clone" in reference to comrades Jim C. and Nason, and foul language). The term "wife" was used in reference to comrade Nason in a very derogatory manner. They in as much admitted their mistake in this regard by agreeing to use another term or description. These words shed very little light on the dispute and tended, as such emotionalism always does, to obscure the underlying political issues. They did not do the cause of producing 1917 West any service with such uncomradely behavior. The membership has a right to expect a higher degree of decorum in political discussion from experienced senior cadre such as these two. Fortunately, we had no new recruits to scare away or intimidate by such behavior.

This error in pedagogy was compounded by the refusal of comrades Riker and Smith (notwithstanding Riker's insufficient response to Riley) to engage in any written polemics on this dispute. By opting out of the debate they have lost an important opportunity to convince other members of the EC and other tendency members of the importance of 1917 West. Worse than doing no service to the cause of 1917 West, such passivity only harms the cause.

Comradely,
Trent and Boyd
6/30/92

Letter from Harlan to Logan—6/28/92

(Excerpt)

TO: BILL - Wellington ONLY

SUBJECT: Jensen and Harlan visit to BAY AREA

COPIES: NONE

(Excerpt)

Unfortunately Jensen and I cannot visit the BAY AREA this summer in spite of having urgent personal reasons for doing so.

...

When Cullen was here I discussed with him my fears that if the BAY AREA infection isn't lanced it can have dire consequences for our tendency. I don't entirely trust my own judgement in this matter. I had had the impression from communications that the BABT had adhered to IS or to IEC changes in the drafts for 1917 WEST. Jim told me that was not the case. Now that another 1917 WEST in the works I can't see how this question of democratic centralist control over content can be postponed, a probable fight which could precipitate another (perhaps more open) declaration of independence. Unfortunately (this is irony) the question hasn't come up over the articles in Bolschewik since the GS comrades have been scrupulous (Konsequent) an adhering to IEC positions and formulations in dealing with those questions over which there are differences and our commentaries and analysis of the German-European political scene have elicited no objections from leading bodies.

comradely
Harlan

Letter from Logan to Riker—7/6/92

From: Bill

To: Fred

Copies: Nil

Subject: Personal

(Excerpt)

Dear Fred,

You're out of your tree, Fred, if you think that we have ever claimed or exercised the right to ignore IS instructions.

If we were instructed to join a popular front, we'd ignore it, of course. In a sense we have a "right" to disobey - which is the "right" to split. But it is unprincipled - unLeninist - to exercise that right except for the most profound reasons and after thorough political preparation and debate.

It is downright silly to think that the PRG would ignore instructions from the IS to tell our international cothinkers what our plans were for a publication.

CGs
Bill

Letter from Logan to Riley—7/6/92

From: Bill

To: Tom (Toronto)

Copies: Nil

Subject: Misc _____

(Excerpt)

Dear Tom

I've sent you a copy of a "personal" letter to Fred, which is sent to him mostly to help establish a pattern of personal letters. After all we have a right to personal correspondence, and I intend to exercise that right. But it would be good if Fred were made party to that.

...

CGsBill

Bay Area T&P and Interrelated Questions—7/6/92

FROM: Kalisch

TO: BABT

COPIES: all points

SUBJECT: Bay Area perspectives and interrelated questions

(Excerpt)

Dear comrades,

...

2) The Press: International, National, Local

The same holds true for the press situation. To begin with, *1917* is our international organ. Around its articles the international goes public after the IEC-discussions. *1917* has the most homogenizing effect of our tendency and it is a must of at least every leading comrade to follow and participate in its procedure. Unfortunately we do not have the forces right now to publish it otherwise than in the English language.

Furthermore we have to see that *1917* has to fulfill another function too, i.e. it has to cover some of the needs of our different sections, mainly in the area of international perspectives. A lot of Bolschewik-articles are *1917*-articles. For the PRG *1917* is their main weapon on the national terrain, the same holds true for the North American BT. Now, along the development of our different groups, the feeling to publish more on national/regional-local issues has come up. The PRG thinks about a national supplement of *1917*, covering NZ national issues. In Germany we established Bolschewik, a combination of *1917* and a German national newspaper. You established *1917 West*.

The question remains, had been your procedure in doing so being proper? To begin with the name of your local/regional newspaper does not fit. We have *1917* and *1917 West* - is that a competition- game we are in? *1917* is our most authoritative organ, in North America it has the function of a North American newspaper. But *1917 West* instead cannot be something other like a regional/local newspaper, which fulfills regional/local needs in the framework of our international/national line. To put it bluntly, *1917 West* is a regional/local appendix of *1917*, it is subordinated to the procedure of *1917* (i.e. our international task) and if it contradicts our overall perspectives we have to delay it for a while. If you are not going through the International you are driving the parts of the International apart. Therefore comrades, take my sharp disagreement with the estimation in the T&P document:

"We propose that we have an understood arrangement with the international editorial board that the production of these two journals be alternated".

That is local parochialism and not the proper way to form an international collective.

Of course I do see the need of the Bay Area comrades to publish a regional/local paper, nobody in the IEC denies this necessity. In order to recruit, especially because of the peculiar situation around San Francisco, we have to propagandistically cover some subjects for which we have no place in the international organ. That the comrades are pushing for this is completely legitimate. But the framework has to be maintained: "*1917 West* must be a part of our international work, our priority is *1917*. If we cannot handle at some points subjects from your proposed propaganda, we all, the IBT including BABT, has to wait. According to my understanding the whole orientation of the T&P-press-perspective of BABT has to be changed: Not alternation of *1917* and *1917 West* is the issue, but how can you comrades improve *1917* (a lot of your proposals fit for *1917* and not for *1917 West*) and, in accordance with the international line, how and how much can you supplement for local needs.

...

4) *1917 West* and Democratic Centralism

Now we are coming to the actual highpoint of our internal dispute. Comrade Riker denies that BABT has breached democratic centralism. Characteristically enough during the Bay Area discussion he used the euphemistic term of having organized a "fait accompli". In a letter to me (May 12) he wrote:

"We did not and do not deny the IS/IEC's authority to be the 'final authority of whatever statement will be published in public'. We submitted every last line of *1917W* to the IS for approval".

This was apparently not the case with the Ice-Cube article. Leaving this question aside for a while, in his continuation comrade Riker reveals his real attitude on dc. He reiterates:

"But let's be clear: I did not think and do not think the IS had the authority (sic!) to prevent BABT from publishing (no more than it had the authority to prevent the publication of Campus Bolshevik). ... No, the question is another different, but equally important question: whether or not the IS will usurp the authority of local leader-

ship in deciding what propaganda is needed for local consumption, how it will be printed, how many will be printed and indeed, WHETHER OR NOT it will be printed".

Comrade Riker here tries to differentiate between "final authority of the IS on political line questions" (to which he pretendedly submits) and the "final authority of the IS on organisational questions" (which he refuses). I accuse comrade Riker of trying to obfuscate the question of democratic centralism in a typical centrist way.

We cannot and have not in the past artificially divided the political from our organisational tasks (comrade Riker has not done either). Frankly speaking, comrades, the IS/IEC has the right to decide whether or not we are publishing a given newspaper of the IBT.

If the Bay Area is the "final authority" in deciding, whether or not 1917W is going to the printer, than BABT is putting the local needs first. But because of its function only the IEC (the IS is only its tool) can have the final authority. We want to have newspapers which are understood and carried by the membership and it can be the case that we are postponing a local issue in order to pursue more important questions. The majority of the IEC was not immune to the needs of BABT (frankly I have to admit, I was very, very puzzled by the growth of the 1917W project and had earlier on a harder stance to postpone it. I was convinced). But the end of the flagpole had been reached, when Riker and obviously Smith too consciously ignored the IS/IEC instruction to present a written proposal before publishing 1917 West. This was a breach of discipline, as Boyd and Treint are pointing out, and should be considered in a T&P document. Comrade Riker's arguments are the "theoretical" justification for such a wrong behaviour and should be dealt in it adequately too.

6) Which way forward? The tasks of the North American section - some remarks from afar.

This necessary clarification on BABT as a body on this disciplinary issue could be the starting point of regaining strength in North America. It would be stupid to see the committed breach of discipline only in the organisational framework. We would be blind not to see that up to now we are drifting apart in North America. And we would be blind not to see the interaction of our big losses in the Bay Area and the reaction of BABT comrades to counter their isolation, the deterioration of our Toronto branch and the stagnation and frustration of our two NY comrades. The T&P document does not at all adequately deal with this problem, instead withdraws itself to the Bay Area.

From another point of perspective - the same holds true in formulating our national North American perspective. In the Bay Area, one of the most political centers in North America I agree, nevertheless you only get a portion of what is happening in the national left we are interested in. Look at the development of the RWL, which split into groups in cities (Detroit), we are not in. Look at the Cliffites (they are growing at least in New York, by the way they are growing all over the world). You might have heard about the split of the Morenoites. You cannot discuss the RTT without the context of the LRCI etc. etc. In serious discussions we should try to get a better understanding what is happening in the North American left and how we can intervene.

The political framework is key. I appreciate the project of Tom to write an article on the American working class. This cannot be a one man project, we have to establish the necessary connections for a collective discussion (I remember of the slogan no "annual retention of articles", which I mentioned at another point). Under such conditions such an article could be the political platform of homogenizing our North American section again.

...

Before finishing I have to address a political question, which was unique in the up to now thoughtful discussion we are undertaking and what we will do in the future. I have to mention the sexist attack of comrade Riker, calling comrade Nason "Tom's wife" while thereby indicating that the latter comrade defines herself through a relationship instead of communist consciousness. This chauvinist attribution was used to ward off a political critique of the IS of which the comrade is a member.

Riker's reply to comrade Hannah was even more outrageous. Although he knows that part of the problems of which "99.99999 of women" have to face is that they are defined through their relationship to men (and that this has something to do with woman oppression), he generously, i.e. cynically, concedes to call comrade Nason a clone (while not withdrawing his earlier sexist attack). (The use out of the IST-garbage-vocabulary clone, in itself questionable, is out of order too. But if we want to take the clone-accusation for a moment seriously, then the comrades might consider only the example of the division inside the IS on the coup question. There was no "wife" and I haven't seen the "clones" either.)

This sort of attacks should be excluded in future of our debate, they are poisoning it. They are furthermore detrimental to integrating women into our organisation, as comrade Hannah pointed out. The "liberal feminists" of the IBT, as Riker prefers to call them, will try to eradicate such attitude in our organisation. I appreciate comrades Boyd's and Treint's handling of this question too (although I would prefer a sharper demarcation line). Anyhow this question too, in my opinion, is worth to be dealt in your T&P document as well.

With communist greetings
Kalisch

On Clarity: Letter from Riker to Logan—7/7/92

FROM: Riker
TO: Logan
SUBJECT: On Clarity
COPIES: Smith

Dear Bill,

Now Bill, don't be cute. You know that we submitted to Riley's demands time after time on the question of *1917W*. We sent every article to the IS for political line approval. We went out and raised the money from the periphery etc. etc., ad nauseum—goal post after goal post after goal post. I know you Bill, you would not have permitted it to continue, either.

I think that given the sensitive nature of the internal situation, I think that sending letters marked "personal" which are, in reality, political correspondence—is not a good idea.

Warmest Communist Regards,
Riker

PS:

Oh, by the way, through some error or another, Harlan's letter to you dated June 28th and entitled: "Jensen and Harlan's visit to the Bay Area" was sent here to us. If you did not get a copy there, please let me know and I'll send it along to you.

FR

Letter from Logan to Riley—7/8/92

From: Bill
To: Tom (Toronto)
Copies: Henning (Berlin)
Subject: BABT *1917 West*
Dear Tom,

As a tactical approach to the BABT problem we should centre on the narrow issue of their refusal to obey the instructions of the IS to prepare a written proposal for *1917 West*.

It seemed to me unfortunate when the issue of Bob Mandel's strike support leaflet came up as such an important issue. It was a thoroughly secondary question in the context of our dispute with these comrades.

Likewise, the question of the Ice-Cube article and the non-appearance of the proper editorial corrections: of course it was wrong of the BABT comrades to omit those corrections, and of course it is an error closely related to the principal problem, but it's an area of secondary importance in this context, irrespective of the kind of consciousness which informed the error.

I'm not arguing that these secondary points should be simply forgotten. They should be raised, but they should be clearly designated as secondary, or otherwise the dispute will achieve a complexity which will be difficult for comrades like Drew and Henry to navigate a way through. At least once in every page we write on the BABT dispute there should be a sentence to this effect: "But the main point is that the BABT comrades clearly and deliberately ignored an unambiguous, simple instruction of the IS they chose to put themselves outside our discipline."

Of course the plans for issue number two of *1917 West* are a worry, and I for one will feel obliged to register that. In my experience, when a small group spends so much energy on publication this has the necessary consequence of NOT spending enough energy talking to potential recruits.

When it is necessary to publish material to draw the line between us and our opponents, then that cannot be avoided, even if we are very small. But the material projected is not on the whole in the programmatic areas in which our differences with our opponents are most sharp.

I think a local BABT paper is a good idea, but it should be about a third this size.

However, we're going to have to acquiesce to this project, but perhaps with two or three reservations. Firstly we should make it clear that, considering the quantity of copy, and the amount of work that has historically been shown to be necessary on their drafts, the International needs at least a month on most of the copy. If there are a few pages which come in at the last minute we'll do our best with them, of course.

Secondly, there may be one or two of the proposed articles the one that occurs to me is the one on abortion which we want to take over for *1917 Proper*.

And thirdly and this really depends on you, Tom we have got to think of the timing of this thing in

relation to the timing of the next issue of 1917 Proper.

Tom, perhaps the IS should consider addressing reservations such as these.

Incidentally, the conception of a popular Marxist press is not merely premature for us it is a completely outdated conception.

There was a time when people could be encouraged to become interested in socialism through the printed word. Ordinary people would actually spend their evenings reading piles of books and papers. Today you've got to be hooked before you'll read socialist material. Actually, not even all that much of what we sell, except when we are able to explain its importance, is really read. It often just sits around in people's apartments until it is thrown out.

For this reason, on the whole I oppose street sales of our literature. It is a waste of comrade time. (There is an exception: there is a place in Wellington which the Communist League and the anarchists, and sometimes the CP sell their papers on a Saturday morning. But the point is that this is not selling to a random market, and anyway our sales there are mostly to put pressure on our opponents.)

Even to get the average member of CopWatch or a united front on abortion to read our material you have to talk them into it. It is very important to get the right proportion of energy spent talking to contacts as against preparing literature.

Later on, rather than a popular press, we'll produce audiotapes and video tapes.

CGsBill

Finances—Letter from Riker to IS/IEC—7/8/92

TO: IS/IEC

SUBJECT: Finances

COPIES: All Locations

Dear Comrades:

... With this file is the BABT financial report for the second quarter of 1992. You will note, once again, that there is a rather large expenditure under "Miscellaneous", and once again, it is due to paying off a back debt to a former treasurer. However, we are now free of all debts, all the bills are paid, and as you can see, we have a balance of nearly \$3,000.

The IS in its minutes dated February 12th noted that they had not received a BABT Local Report in nearly a year. When Bill was in town he also noted that we had not been as diligent as we might have been in sending out reports to the rest of the organization generally, (although he noted that we had been sending trade-union reports with some regularity).

BABT took the criticism to heart. Comrade Boyd, who had been responsible for sending out reports, minutes, financial reports etc., was just to overburdened with other assignments to do the job right. We assigned Comrade Trent to do the local reports and I was made treasurer with the understanding that regular financial reports would be made.

Since then (early March) all minutes (back minutes and current ones) have been sent out along with minutes of the CopWatch fraction. Financial reports, generated by computer here, are now being taken care of and I have taken on much of the work of keeping up with corresponding with other locations.

This leads me to then inquire of the people who gave us so much valuable advice on reports: Where are your reports? We have not seen a financial report from either New York or Toronto in well over a year. Berlin is months behind and, to my knowledge, there has never been a financial report from Hamburg—in over four years(!).

The IS (who doesn't answer its correspondence very much these days either) noted in the IS Minutes No. 25 that:

Re 2) We think it reasonable that each branch should reimburse BABT for the shipping costs of 1917 #11. We also think that BABT should pay for the production costs of this issue in full, since it is the branch that can best afford to do so.

How is it possible to determine whether or not the BABT "is the branch that can best afford" to pay for the production costs of 1917 #11 when there are no financial reports? Crystal ball? Ouija Board?

Comrades? Anybody there?

As we have been saying for months, the norms of democratic centralism are only "democratic" when they are applied uniformly.

Waiting to hear from you.

CG's Riker

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 7/9/93 #26)

FOR IEC

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) Old Business, 2) Proposal for "Friends of the BABT", 3) New Workers Power polemic, 4) *1917 West*, 5) Financial Reports, 6) Org Rules Committee, 7) *1917*

(Excerpt)

...

Re 2)

The purpose of BABT and IBT locals everywhere should be to sort out potential members from sympathizers, not to blur the distinction between the two. In a situation such as that of BABT, where sympathizers outnumber members, the effect of a separate sympathizer organization can only be to blur the line, and to give sympathizers an undue influence in the affairs of the local. Most of the BABT milieu is composed not of people whose life circumstances make it impossible for them to fulfill membership obligations, but of individuals who have chosen, for one reason or another, not to do so. We do not favor giving this lesser commitment an independent organizational expression.

...

Re 4):

We have examined Boyd's proposal for *1917 West* #2, and think the projected article topics are appropriate. However, due to the anticipated length of 24 pages, we expect it will take some time for the IEC/IS to review and approve the articles. We think that it might be better if it were to be 16 pages, but leave this to the BABT comrades. However BABT comrades should make allowance for this editing process in their production schedule. Since there seems to be some confusion in BABT over authority to determine the contents of *1917 West* (see appended document), we would like to reemphasize that all articles, signed or unsigned, must be approved by the IS. Of course we would not print a signed article if the author objected to the political changes, but the organization (i.e., the leadership) must approve the final version.

We also note that Boyd is in agreement that given Bay Area sales of the first issue (approximately 270) that the issue should be photocopied, not offset like #1, and that there should be a smaller initial press run of perhaps 150 copies, with further copies to be produced as needed. This will allow us to keep the printing costs in line with the demand.

Re 5):

There seem to be some misconceptions regarding financial reports. BABT has been anticipating receipt of financial reports from other branches. Unlike organizers' reports, which are to be sent to all points, the procedure established since the 1990 fusions has been for all branches to send financial reports to the IS, which acts as our ersatz center. The information is for the use of the IS/IEC and is therefore available to IEC members who request it. Because financial information is potentially sensitive we do not make a practise of having it generally available. Non-IEC comrades who want information can request it, and the IS/IEC can decide whether or not to release it.

There have been some erratic functioning regarding filing these reports from some locals, as well as in the IS's role in ensuring that the information is up to date, but all branches have made financial reports to the IS.

...

Next Meeting: 29 July

Submitted by
Cullen, 10 July, 1992,
Approved 12 July

APPENDIX:

(The following item was chewed up by a computer and had to be re-input. It is possible that there are some typos that did not appear in the original)

Toronto

5 July 1992

Dear Comrades:

This is a contribution to the ongoing discussion of the question of democratic centralism in general and the peculiar conceptions held by the two leading and most experienced comrades in the BABT in particular. The

aberrant behavior in connection with the first issue of *1917 West* made it clear that we need to go back and reiterate the basics of our organizational framework.

To help put one of the concrete issues in focus and to provide a particularly striking example of the formal political results of the violation of democratic centralism in connection with the first issue of *1917 West*, we are providing comrades with documentary evidence in the form of the only draft to our knowledge where the explicit instructions of the elected leading body of the organization were wilfully ignored.

Through the course of previous discussions, the BAPT comrades in charge of the editing and production of the paper had repeatedly claimed that they had scrupulously accepted all the political changes the IS proposed, and were merely disputing the leadership's right to decide the organizational and financial priorities of the group. We initially accepted that this was an accurate representation. Yet, when we read the printed version of the "Ice Cube" article we were compelled to go back and check the IS version which had been sent out. It was apparent that either a) we had done a very poor job of politically editing the piece, or b) that not all of our changes had in fact been included. When we compared the IS corrected text with that published by the BAPT we found that there was a significant disparity.

What we have here is another example (besides that of Jimstown) of how in revolutionary politics the organizational question is a political question. When one or another group of comrades decides to ignore the authority of the elected leadership on "organizational" or financial matters in the name of local autonomy (i.e., parochialism) this is in itself a violation of an essential part of the political program of Leninism (i.e., the principles of democratic centralism).

In his 30 March letter in reply to comrade Riley, comrade Riker makes no bones about this, while blaming comrade Smith for the initial decision to refuse to comply with the instructions of the leadership. Of their joint decision to ignore the IS/IEC's authority (something that comrades Boyd and Trent report was not even communicated to the other half of the BAPT) comrade Riker simply states: "I supported that decision then, and support it now, because (as is clear from Riley's 36-page document) the ensuing 'discussion' would have tied up the project for months, perhaps permanently."

No prevarication here. It is all quite straightforward. Riker thought that the elected bodies might have wanted too much discussion or made too many criticisms or changes. The project could have been tied up for months, he thought. This he considers sufficient justification for defying the highest bodies of the organization! You do not need to be an expert on democratic centralism to know that there is something very wrong here. If we were to enshrine this concepts in our organizational rules, it might read as follows:

"All individual party members and all lower bodies are required to carry out the instructions of the duly constituted leading bodies of the organization, except when they consider that they are involved in activities that are too important to abide by such instructions."

The fact is that the IS turned each of the drafts around in about a week. But this is essentially irrelevant, for comrade Riker's argument poses the question to the level of principle. Comrades who read over the IS changes included in the Cuba book review — appended to Riley's letter on the whole issue of 29 March — as well as this one, can judge for themselves whether our changes were on the whole useful or examples of "overediting" as comrade Riker has claimed. But whatever one's opinion on the validity of our concrete suggestions, the key issue here is one of principle. Either democratic centralism is how we operate (regardless of anticipations of tardiness or even worse from leading bodies) or it is not.

Comrade Riker, regardless of the subjective notions in his head, is objectively arguing against democratic centralism. For him the issue is "the question of *1917W* and whether or not BAPT had the right to publish it without a nod from Toronto." By "Toronto" Riker means the International Secretariat, which is the operational arm of the IEC. This conception is a regression to the organizational principles of the USec, the Class Struggle League and a host of other centrist formations. It is a deviation from Leninism.

Of course, comrades who begin to deviate from Leninism rarely, if ever, do so in a manner which is fully conscious. They are often driven by other usually subjective motivations. Sometimes this kind of behavior is an expression of tiredness and a lack of revolutionary energy. Sometimes they are resentful of their failure to convince a majority of their comrades through open discussion and go behind the back of the organization to implement what they feel like. When comrades call them to account they may develop amnesia, or propose viewing their indefensible behavior as "water under the bridge."

But we cannot build a serious revolutionary organization unless we hold fast to the principles of Leninism. And that means that the minority must submit to the majority, the local to the national, the national to the international leadership. That is the issue. Comrade Riker (abetted by comrade Smith) decided that this did not apply in the case of *1917 West*. We find it hardly surprising, given this deviation, to discover a softness on other non-Marxist ideas, several of which were included in the Ice Cube article against the specific instructions of the elected leadership.

...

When the original draft of this article was submitted, BABT strongly advised that we edit it with a view to content rather than style. The printed version, however, incorporates most of the technical and stylistic changes suggested, but deliberately leaves out most of the substantive political revisions. There is a definite pattern to these omissions.

First, it would seem that Gerald (and perhaps the author, James) regard all implications that Ice Cube has only a "confused notion" of who the oppressors of black people are as condescending.

Secondly, the original draft was tinged with black nationalism., specifically the notion that "white Amerikka" is out to kill and destroy black people. It has become almost an article of faith in the black ghettos (and even among many of the black middle-class) that drugs, AIDS and police brutality are part of a white conspiracy to eliminate blacks. Such notions are widely propagated by the Nation of Islam, which directs much of its venom against Jews in particular. The original draft (and, as it turns out, the final printed version), while repudiating anti-Semitism, contains rhetoric that could be interpreted as lending credence to such conspiracy theories (America is "destroying us", "killing us", etc.) Jim discussed this problem at length with Gerald over the phone. The IS revisions were intended specifically to sift out this kind of rhetoric.

The fact that many of these questionable phrases remained is disturbing. The author of the article, James, is very young and new to Marxist politics, and may still unconsciously harbor black nationalist notions. We suspect that James was probably attached to some of his original formulations, and did not agree with the IS proposed changes. In this case, it would appear that Gerald indulged him rather than argued with him politically. It is often a temptation to give ground to certain elements of backward "mass" consciousness for the sake of greater "relevance" and popularity. This is called opportunism, and could be very harmful to us if allowed to go unchecked.

If we have a democratic-centralist organization, it is possible to argue out such points, or at least to reach an operational decision by holding a vote. But the blatant breach of democratic centralism in connection with the first issue of *1917 West* if generalized could only create a situation where the organization is paralyzed. Demoralization, tiredness and frustration do not produce very good programmatic impulses. This is why it is so very important to go to the bottom of the problems associated with the last issue, and for the comrades who made the errors to either acknowledge that what they did was wrong or attempt to justify their actions to their comrades. Comrades who are not prepared to do either do not deserve to be taken seriously by those who want to build a viable revolutionary organization.

Comrade Riker in his attempt to evade a serious discussion of his discreditable behavior in connection with this venture (letter of 30 March) makes the following statement: "We are willing to submit any article for 1917W to the Ed Board for review of it's political line."

What are we to make of this? Is it his view of democratic centralism that the elected international leading bodies can "review" the political line of a publication, but that some unelected grouping will actually determine it through the method of "fait accompli" and hasty trips to the printer? The most obvious results of the indecent haste with which this little coup was carried out — the group's name spelled wrong; the missing union bug the multiple typos and textual errors — are not the worst products of such bureaucratic methods.

—International Secretariat

Letter from Logan to Riker—7/9/92

From: Bill
To: Fred
Copies: Nil
Subject: Personal

Dear Fred,

I don't understand your worry about personal communication. There is a long tradition of personal political communication in the Trotskyist movement. Of course the Spartacists had some bizarre paranoia about it, associated with the regime's need to see and manage everything, but I can't see the problem for us.

After all, everyone has telephone calls and other personal conversations with one another locally and nationally. Why should Gerald be allowed personal communication with you, but not me?

Thanks also for the note about Howard's letter getting to you, but I got it OK. It's a pity that if I get to the Bay Area in the next period I'm unlikely to coincide with him or Ushi.

CGs
Bill

Letter from Smith to IEC—7/12/92

FROM: Smith
TO: IS/IEC
SUBJECT: Financial Reports
COPIES: All Points
Dear Comrades:

It has been brought to my attention by Comrade Boyd that Comrade Riley is attempting to legitimize his grossly undemocratic and undisciplined behavior, i.e. his refusal to forward the financial reports to the BABT, with the slimy and chickenshit assertion that he has not answer our numerous requests because the letters were signed by Riker and not by Smith. This is either idiot formalism or a gross betrayal of his responsibilities as a leading member of this organization.

As an IEC member I demand that he send these reports immediately to the BABT, addressed to me.

If Comrade Riley were genuinely concerned (or genuine at all) about the security issues surrounding these requests by Riker, he could have merely said so. Instead, he has defaulted in his responsibilities as a member of a (long-moribund) "International Secretariat". He could have sent the documents by surface mail to Smith's house, or he could have sent them via Compuserve using encryption. There are many possibilities. The fact is, this is petty bourgeois pique, not democratic centralist "norms" or even communist consciousness.

On The Differences:

I have important differences with Riley, Logan and Henning on the question of how this organization should be run. What democratic centralism really means when we have no center and no authoritative central leadership hammered together over an extended period of collaboration.

We have put together an international tendency made up of people from a common (Spartacist) background but, who in reality rarely work with or see each other. In reality we are like pen pals who share a common political program and a shared poverty. Now, through the officious functioning of the IS/IEC, even this anemic, weak, poverty stricken beginning is being deformed before it has begun to really function.

A tragic-comic side point—Riley (and his unfortunate bloc-partner Boyd) claim that the BABT is "rich"(!) BABT will (if it continues to claim the loyalty of its periphery, if its comrades remain employed and, if it is lucky) produce about \$20,000 this year in gross revenue. The grim reality is that this is not much comrades. It certainly doesn't make us "rich". But more importantly it is absurd for anyone to assert that we are "rich" and therefore will pay for 1917 "in full" (see IS minutes # 25, June 24, 1992), without documenting this through the circulation of the proper information, i.e. the financial reports.

Timely information and trust is the basis of workers' democracy.

Riker and I have sent the following Trotsky quote in response to some of Riley's past nonsense. We feel it is still relevant:

"In general, I must say the following: If the leadership wants to gain authority (and it is duty bound to want this) it must not proceed as if it already possesses unshatterable authority and

must at first base itself as little as possible on its purely formal rights. The Executive must retain a quiet, friendly tone and show its utmost patience, especially towards its opponents. The Executive cannot gain any authority if it does not show in actuality to the entire organization its complete objectivity and conscientiousness in all sorts of conflicts and its concern about the organization as such. Only on this kind of authority, which cannot be achieved in one day, can organizational steps, disciplinary measures, etc., be based. Without this the organization cannot live. The attempt to use disciplinary measures without the necessary authority and without the conviction of the organization as to the correctness of these measures leads inevitably not to the strengthening of the organization but to its weakening, and above all to the collapse of the Executive itself." (Problems of the German Section, WLT [1930-31] pg. 143)

Make sense? Try it.

For collaboration
despite our differences,
Smith

Letter from Riley to Smith—7/13/92

TORONTO

(Excerpt)

DEAR GERALD:

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE MOST RECENT 2 HAMBURG LOCAL TREASURERS' REPORTS THAT I HAVE AS WELL AS THE MOST RECENT PRG REPORT. PLEASE SHOW FRED THE POINT IN THE MINUTES OF THE IS MEETING NO. 26 (WHICH I HAVE ALSO SENT OUT) ON THE POLICY REGARDING ACCESSIBILITY OF THE REPORTS. (The NZ dollar is worth I think less than 50 cents US).

THESE ARE THE HAMBURG TREASURER'S REPORTS FOR OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1991. FROM JANUARY THEY WERE TO BE COMBINED WITH BERLIN FOR A TOTAL GS REPORT.

...

RILEY

A Call from Gerald and Fred—7/13/92

From: Bill

To: All members

Copies: All points

Subject: Call from Gerald and Fred

Dear comrades,

This morning I received a call from Gerald in the Bay Area. Fred was with him at the time of the call, and also spoke to me briefly. I took no notes of the conversation, but from memory these are the salient points. Gerald will correct any errors I make. I conclude with some comments on factionalism.

Report

Both Gerald and Fred were very upset or angry this morning. The heaviest weight of their concern seemed to be about money, and a sense that the BAPT was being diddled, but there may also have been an element of a more generalised sense of alienation from the organisation, a sense of feeling like outsiders.

Gerald said that he had information that there was an undeclared faction. He did not say what this information was. He asked if there was a declared faction.

I said there was no declared faction, but that the refusal of the Bay Area leadership to accept instructions from the IS was a factional type of action and represented a refusal to accept the discipline of the organisation.

Gerald disagreed with that.

I said that despite this indiscipline, and the extremely serious position it put us in, we had decided to be patient, to keep cool, and not to force anything to a premature conclusion.

He said that it was a proto-factional situation and that there was a possibility of a split. He asked "Do you want a BAPT without me and Fred?"

I replied in the negative.

Gerald said that no branch had paid monies which it had been agreed should be paid to the BAPT.

I said that the PRG treasurer was in the process of remitting money.

He said: "Does that mean that your non-payment is not a factional ploy."

I said that it was not, and that the BABT would be paid. (In fact on investigation I find that the treasurer of the PRG did not get a 21 June note from me communicating the PRG exec authorization of a substantial payment. She now has the note and will act on it as soon as possible.)

Gerald said that the IS had decided that the BABT was in the best position to pay for 1917, but that the BABT had no way of knowing the IS was telling the truth on this because the BABT had not received financial reports from other branches.

He said that Fred had made seven requests for information from Tom, and received no response. He admitted that Tom had been constrained by unusual family and Compuserve difficulties.

I said that I could see why Tom and/or the IS might have difficulty coming to a decision on such requests. I said I had seen only one such request, and very recently. I said that Fred had no right to the information anyway. Financial information should not be dispersed. I said that Gerald had a right to the information as a member of the IEC, and if he required it he should request it.

At several points in the conversation Gerald accused Tom of dishonesty, although he did not specify the circumstances of this dishonesty.

He also said that there is no IS, and that the IS is a fraud.

I said that the non-recognition of a duly established central body was a serious problem and tended to put him outside our organisational framework.

Gerald said he was pleased that Henning had written his document, because it was clear that Henning was opposed to the publication of *1917 West*.

I said that on my reading of Henning's document he was in favour of a BABT local organ.

Gerald said that Henning said contradictory things in his document.

Fred

Fred said that the BABT was not getting the reports and information it requires, and that it would not therefore send out reports or information.

I said that democratic centralism required more frequent and regular reporting from lower levels to higher levels than from higher levels to lower levels.

Fred said there had been an attempt to designate the BABT as a part of a North American Section of the IBT, but that there was no North American Section.

I agreed with Fred that no North American Section had been set up, but said that I believed that the BABT should move towards becoming a part of a North American Section.

Fred said: "We don't want the Canadians." He asked me to put in writing my view that there is not at this time a North American Section.

I said that in any case the issue of a North American Section was irrelevant to the issue of the BABT's non-compliance with the directions of the IS.

Goalposts

I have personally had some correspondence with Fred recently in which he excuses non-compliance with the instructions of the IS to prepare a proposal for *1917 West* on the grounds that the demand for a proposal represented a new obstacle to *1917 West* after many previous obstacles ("goalposts").

If other goalposts had previously been in place and those goalposts were inappropriate, then it was appropriate to complain, but it is difficult to see any valid objection that can be made in good faith to a request to outline to your comrades internationally a proposal for a major project you intend to undertake. Internal discussion is not a goalpost - it's the half the ball.

Comment

I presume that Fred and Gerald communicate and co-operate politically in the interests of defending their position that it is OK to ignore IS instructions. They have the right to that cooperation, and the rest of us should not raise the temperature by stressing the movement towards factionalism which this represents. I'm sure they don't consider it factional.

Of course there has also been communication and co-operation between comrades opposed to BABT indiscipline and in defence of the right of the IS to issue binding instructions (even if that has not been sufficient to achieve a wholly coherent tactical approach). It is appropriate for comrades on the same side of an important argument to communicate and cooperate.

Fred and Gerald have doubtless got wind of some element of the communication we have had, and consider it factional.

If the majority has made an error in this regard, it might have been in FAILING to act in a factional way. A factional approach might have led to a better concentration of fire on the key issue - the refusal of the BABT leadership to accept the instructions of the IS to make a formal proposal on *1917 West*. If on the majority side we have been factional, then we've been thoroughly incompetent about it.

However, we are being successful in one thing, which I think may yet prove to have been worthwhile. The leading comrades on this side of the dispute have been relatively successful in dissuading our co-thinkers from bringing the dispute to a premature organisational conclusion. Let us continue to act towards the Bay Area comrades who refuse to accept the authority of our leading bodies with firm, calm patience.

One thing is for sure. There can be no accusation of cliquism on either side here. Everyone is taking their bloc partners according to their openly stated political positions. It is just a pity that Fred and Gerald have such a bad position.

I retain the hope of some change in that position.

Cgs
Bill

"International Secretariat" Functioning—7/13/92

FROM: Riker

TO: All IEC members

SUBJECT: "International Secretariat" functioning

COPIES: All Points

Dear Comrades:

I think Logan is right. It is time to cool down tempers and let's just relax. Smith has said he will write a document to answer the present contretemps stirred up by the comrades in New York and Toronto. So everyone just sit back and let's take our collective finger off the trigger.

Now, although I support Comrade Smith, and think others will as well when he has set the facts in the case straight, I don't intend to play much more of a role in the controversy. I anticipate retiring from an active role in politics next spring and it is hardly fair for me to crank up this fight if I'm not going to be here to carry it through at the next conference.

However, just so comrades have no doubt where I stand, I want to reiterate my support for Smith and for the BABT's right to publish local propaganda unhindered by some comrades dishonest machinations predicated on their own political agenda. These comrades, and I'm talking primarily about Tom and to a lesser extent Jim, have functioned in a very dishonest, unprincipled and factional manner since as far back as the BT/PRG fusion where they falsified the history of BABT and lied to the comrades of the PRG and GIVI when they lined them up with their own "history" of the events here in 1987-88.

Comrades must understand that much of the heat in this discussion is due to these "history lessons" by Tom's. Much of the heat also comes from the smoldering resentment over his (mal)functioning on the Ed Board, and his unprincipled attempts to destroy Smith's political authority at and after the BT/PRG fusion conference. When he is writing his document, I strongly urge Smith to go into the history of these affairs as it is important in order to understand as well as deal with the current silly season in Toronto/NYC.

In the meantime, BABT has a number of people around it that are moving toward membership. It would be criminal for us to now throw away all the work we've put into getting them to this point in order to now turn inward and concentrate all our energies on a bitter and destructive fight.

So, I urge comrades to be patient, (literary eloquence and profligacy are not Smith's strong suite), and all charges, pseudo-charges, snotty asides and contretemps will be answered in good time.

CG's
Riker

Letter from Riley to Logan—7/21/92

Toronto

(Excerpt)

Dear Bill:

A couple of things:

...

3. The situation with Marc, the Quebec comrade, is quite promising. The TL is about 2 steps behind, but now they have caught wind. He has surfaced in a completely believable fashion—and has told them that upon reading our material that he generally finds himself closer to us than them on most questions. They responded, after an initial attempt by a young hack to solve the problem with some martinet-commandism, by telling him that there is no problem with joining while having BT positions—indeed they tried to get us to join but we refused.

They are playing for him—not of course to really keep him in the long run but to get an operation off the ground in this very important nation, and to prevent him going to us. We are playing for the only other Quebecois they have (besides the young hack) Denis, who is a long-time supporter of theirs but has now come to the position that before he would join the TL he would first have discussions with us. The TL tried to get these guys to come to some kind of meeting or conference in TO for this weekend but they said they could not. So instead comrades from Toronto (and New York I suspect) are going to Montreal. So it is all coming to a head quickly. Marc is trying to arrange for me to talk to Denis over the phone this week. I have been pushing for them to make the focus not the regime question (on which they had serious reservations about the TL before they talked to us or read our material which Jimstown etc. confirmed and generalized) but rather the August coup.

...

The only big question that I have about this is the announcement to the BABT. I have kept pretty quiet about it, although I told both Drew and Gerald that we had an interesting contact in Quebec. Neither were all that interested. But it seems to me that we are getting close the showdown and that one way or the other this is a significant blow at the ICL. That is why they are prepared to be so reasonable (so far) to try to accommodate the guy. They just printed 4 pages of a letter he wrote in their paper, they have got a new office in Montreal and they have a little anglo jerk taking Berlitz French. It all depended on this guy who has now come over to us. I have copies of the correspondence between him and the TL, which should remind all of us that they can still be a fairly potent political opponent.

So I think I am (finally) going to write up an organizers report which includes all of the above. We have been concerned that the Menshevism in the BABT might result in leaks (as the distinction between members and non-members seems to be disappearing) or, if things got very sour, in a vindictive release of information to create an abortion. But that danger seems past, and I think that the possible bad feelings of further down-playing outweigh the dangers of security.

I imagine that there will be agreement, but any comments are welcome. If I do not get any I will proceed.

4. I read Bill's reply to Fred and agree that it is necessary to get on the record. I was so pleased to read Fred putting in writing his desire to quit and his decision not to try to make a big factional struggle (after once again losing his own base!) that I am not inclined to want to do anything more than pursue this thing in a very pedagogical fashion and essentially ignore the personal slander and abuse. I think that with luck we can move up the date of his departure and avoid the immediate damage of a high-profile acrimonious split/quit. This is very much to our advantage. Gerald has taken over (partially) Dick Fraser's arguments about how Trotskyist groups go wrong by trying to institute democratic-centralism a la Third International. Fraser ended up in the DSA as a result. But we can have a pretty instructive discussion—if Gerald ever puts anything in writing.

5. I think that in general such d-c correspondence as we feel necessary (and I think that the necessity is significantly diminished already) should only be sent out by you, Henning or myself. But it should be sent to Jim directly. Apparently your latest one was not. And I was going to read it to him but that part of my disk was wiped out. So I think it is fine, but Jim would like to see it for himself.

CGs,
Tom

cc: Jim, Henning

Letter from Barbara—9/14/92

From: Barbara
To: IS/IEC
Copies: All points
Re: Private correspondence
Dear Comrades,

Yesterday I was informed that the BABT local meeting held the previous day (which I did not attend due to illness) had unanimously passed the following motion:

That Dorn is hereby under discipline to turn over all reports on BABT written to other locals/sections during her 2 trips here.

The background to this is that at the previous meeting (which I did attend) in an agenda item entitled "Comrades' functioning" Fred gave a ten minute presentation in which he read out a private letter from me to Bill which he had somehow got hold of. This letter reported on some of the activities of the BABT and expressed some criticisms of individual comrades and the branch as a whole. There then followed three rounds of discussion, in which all four comrades accused me of unprincipled behaviour in daring not to show them this letter.

During the course of this discussion Fred said that he had more than one letter of mine, although to my knowledge he has not shown further letters to all BABT comrades.

I object strongly to this motion and to the other infringements of my right to private correspondence. I don't believe that the local has the authority to impose this kind of "discipline" which is clearly at odds with internal democracy. I ask the IS and IEC to consider whether this motion is appropriate.

I have no "reports on BABT written to other locals/sections" which the comrades do not already have access to. I have written letters to one or more individuals in the IBT which report on the activities of this local. I don't believe that the BABT has an automatic right to read such letters. In the current circumstances they have even less right. Other members of the IBT have attempted to engage comrades Smith and Riker in an open written discussion about the political issues at stake in their breach of democratic centralism over the publication of *1917 West*. So far, they have not participated in this discussion.

Private communication, both oral and written, is an important part of the functioning and democracy of our organisation and the history of our movement. So is open political discussion of our differences. Smith and Riker engage in the first; it is a pity they are doing little on an international level about the second.

In the meantime I do not intend to comply in any way with the BABT motion.

CGs
Barbara

One Spartacist League Is Enough—Part I

DATE: September 16, 1992
FROM: Riker/Smith
TO: All Comrades—Urgent
SUBJECT: The Regime Question
COPIES: All Points
Dear Comrades:

We are writing today to tell you of one of the most serious threats to a healthy internal life this organization has ever faced. There is a clear and present danger here of our organization taking on the cult-like internal life of so many other left organizations. We are sending this letter to sound the alarm on this question! This must be stopped here and now, join us in this protest!

-0-

Comrades Logan, Riley, Dorn and others have spied on and conspired behind the backs of the BABT local in a most unprincipled and most certainly un-Bolshevik fashion.

At the July 3rd BABT local meeting, Riker had given a presentation on democratic centralist functioning and how it effected political letters and reports from one local to another. This was done for the benefit of Cde. Dorn (who had arrived in BABT on June 30th), who is a junior comrade who may not have been familiar with Bolshevik norms on this question.

Riker told Dorn that she was certainly entitled to write personal letters to whom ever she wished but that, as a matter of form, we expected copies all reports on her activities to be given to the local. This was, Riker explained, so that the local leadership could respond to any characterizations or incorrect political points in the report.

We in no way sought to restrict her right to write such reports—we merely wished to see what was being said about us.

On July 6th Riker got a letter from Cde Logan that while marked "Personal", was, in its entirety a political letter that dealt with the internal situation, popular fronts, the chances of individual recruitment vs. regroupment etc. etc.

Riker, in consultation with Smith, sent an immediate return letter which said:

"I think that given the sensitive nature of the internal situation, sending letters marked "personal" which are, in reality, political correspondence—is not a good idea."

As a post script Riker informed Logan that a "private", "personal" (conspiratorial and factional) letter from Harlan to Logan had accidentally ended up in our Compuserve file. The letter (Harlan's) referred to previous correspondence about BABT from Logan that we had not received copies of. We thought this was a good example of how "private" correspondence behind the backs of BABT was harmful and counter-productive, so we thought we'd let Logan (and others) know that we had received it and, perhaps they would see the harm and danger of what they were doing. It was not to be.

On July 7th Riker received a reply from Logan that said:

"I don't understand your worry about personal communication. There is a long tradition of personal political communication in the Trotskyist movement. Of course the Spartacists had some bizarre paranoia about it, associated with the regime's need to see and manage everything, but I can't see the problem for us.

"After all, everyone has telephone calls and other personal conversations with one another locally and nationally. Why should Gerald be allowed personal communication with you, but not me?

"Thanks also for the note about Howard's letter getting to you, but I got it OK. It's a pity that if I get to the Bay Area in the next period I'm unlikely to coincide with him or Ushi."

Subsequently, through no initiative of ours, we came into possession of a number of letters between various members of the leadership of the organization—also all behind the backs of the BABT.

One of these letters was from Logan to Riley written about the time of the exchange between Logan and Riker. It said in part:

"From: Bill

"To: Tom (Toronto)

"Copies: Nil

"Date: 11:03am Monday 6 July 1992 (NZ Time)

"Subject: Misc _____

"Dear Tom

"I've sent you a copy of a "personal" letter to Fred, which is sent to him mostly to help establish a pattern of personal letters. After all we have a right to personal correspondence, and I intend to exercise that right. But it would be good if Fred were made party to that. . . ."

So, instead of ceasing this unprincipled behavior, Logan—who should know better, writes Riley and rings him in on the deal. Notice in Logan's letter he has the word "personal" in quotes? What can that possibly mean except that the letters he was sending were intended to be anything BUT "personal" letters. It is obvious that this correspondence is political and is of interest to the entire "duly elected" IEC.

Then on July 21 Riley replies:

"Toronto

"21 July 1992

"Dear Bill:

"A couple of things:

...

"4. I read Bill's reply to Fred and agree that it is necessary to get on the record. I was so pleased to read Fred putting in writing his desire to quit and his decision not to try to make a big factional struggle (after once again losing his own base!) that I am not inclined to want to do anything more than pursue this thing in a very pedagogical fashion and essentially ignore the personal slander and abuse. I think that with luck we can move up the date of his departure and avoid the immediate damage of a high-profile acrimonious split/quit. This is very much to our advantage. Gerald has taken over (partially) Dick Fraser's arguments about how Trotskyist

groups go wrong by trying to institute democratic-centralism ala Third International. Fraser ended up in the DSA as a result. But we can have a pretty instructive discussion—if Gerald

ever puts anything in writing.

“5. I think that in general such d-c correspondence as we feel necessary (and I think that the necessity is significantly diminished already) should only be sent out by you, Henning or myself. But it should be sent to Jim directly. Apparently your latest one was not. And I was going to read it to him but that part of my disk was wiped out. So I think it is fine, but Jim would like to see it for himself.

“CGs,

“Tom

cc: Jim, Henning”

So now Riley is on board for this super-secret “personal” correspondence. Not only that, but he wants Logan to be sure to send copies “to Jim directly”. No need to worry here, ole Jim’s one of us good guys—send him the correspondence too. (We notice, however that Jensen is never mentioned as one of the correspondents—could it have been that they knew that she might blow the whistle on this IEC within an IEC?

Then at the September 1st BABT local meeting Riker read excerpts from a report Dorn had written to Logan on August 5th (copies to Riley only). The report said in part:

“Dear Bill,

“A few rather disjointed thoughts.

“COPWATCH

“Copwatch seems to be picking up again after something of a summer break. I’m beginning to suspect that Gerald is tending towards some kind of capitulation to this milieu, or at least is showing signs of the capability to do so.

“A new Copwatch Report has just come out and there are two things about it which are concerning in terms of the kind of united front literature that we want to be a part of. One is a “Copwatch statement” about the curfew that was imposed in Berkeley after the LA events. It essentially advises the cops that in order to “maintain order” they should have only applied a curfew to one street. Apparently Drew saw this and didn’t pick it up - very sloppy.

“The other thing - which concerns me more - is the reprinting by Copwatch Report of our LA: Days of Rage leaflet. Apparently some of the Copwatchers liked it and suggested themselves that it should be reprinted. Gerald did some editing to cut it down to their word limit and it went in under his name. After it had been handed in to the editorial committee the BABT decided that it should have the BT’s name on it. Drew arranged for this to happen but the person he arranged it with later changed his mind and it went out with only Gerald’s name.

“On reading the article after it had been published, I noticed that not only does it not have our name on but the “cutting down” consistently removed most or all mentions of socialism, revolution, the revolutionary party and the need thereof. It comes across pointing out that racism is a result of capitalism, that blacks and whites suffer from the same system and that the working class should organise to do something about it. End of story.

“I spoke to Gerald, asking what his reasons were for doing this. He started out by saying that he was just cutting it down and there was no political pattern to it. As I insisted that there was, he said that he wanted to keep all the facts and he thought the parts about the police were the most important for this milieu. He said “but Drew saw it” and “OK, next time I’ll show it to the whole group first.” He challenged me to cut it down to that word limit without cutting out those bits. It was a very friendly conversation but he gave the impression that he thought I was making a fuss about nothing. In a sense I believe him, I don’t think this was a conscious political decision - he said he did it in half an hour. Even more worrying - this is what his first instincts are.

“Gerald also has a tendency to use language (such as “people of colour”) in Copwatch meeting which does not really express our politics. A small point, but indicative. I think he tends to get very involved in the short term aims of Copwatch and loses sight of where the BT can get most advantage. For instance we decided that I should do some office work, as an opportunity to get to talk to some people - something which I am quite capable of volunteering for myself. But Gerald keeps on trying to volunteer me for stuff that will be very little use in terms of our work, just because it will help Copwatch out. I know we have to be “best builders” but we should apply tactical discretion in how we do it.

"For the upcoming *1917 West* there is an article about Cops, Crime and Capitalism which mentions our work in Copwatch. I guess this will be the first time that the Spartacists and other serious opponents will find out that we are working there. If the SL have the sense to compare the two versions, or even just use the statement on the curfew, then they could have a nice little article on our capitulation to popular fronts - which would have a lot more basis to it than their criticism of the anti-war work etc.

"I don't know how much fuss to make about this seeing as it is very much related to the *1917 West* issue. As well as Gerald I have mentioned it to Drew. It is something that has the potential to come up in the Copwatch fraction among people who don't and shouldn't know about the fight going on. These contacts already know that Drew fucked up by not picking up the curfew thing.

"Copies of Copwatch Report are sitting in the office waiting to be send out to all points. I'll try and hurry Henry on this, but I'm not sure how to do it tactfully.

"We are planning to bring up the question of whether organisations can sign articles in CWR at the next meeting (Monday). I think they probably will agree to this.

"I'll await instructions. I could do anything on the Days of Rage issue from shutting up altogether to bringing it up as a fight in a branch meeting (where Fred will probably back me and suggest that we pull out of Copwatch altogether!).

"Gerald and Drew have asked me to look at the third version of your Copwatch document and do some brief editing to make it fit for Copwatch itself. On looking at it I think it needs more than brief editing and in fact needs to be something on what we are doing in Copwatch and what a united front is, with special emphasis on the question of propaganda. I think this is the right time to give it to them but I'm not sure.

"Contacts and Study Classes

"I have been appointed Contact Chair (without making it seem too much from my own initiative). I suggested the idea of study classes every two weeks which was very enthusiastically taken up by Gerald and mildly enthusiastically by Drew and Henry. Fred was not at this meeting because he is on leave. It was a lot more productive. However there is still the problem of the conflict between Drew and Gerald. Even on a discussion round where we were all basically in agreement they managed to accuse each other of "misinterpretation".

"We have arranged for Keith to give the first class. There is a huge list of possible people to invite - who they just haven't been able to do anything with. We have decided to focus it towards Copwatch (and the fraction) and are holding the classes in the Copwatch offices.

"Lack of Leadership in the Branch

"Drew is more and more seeing me as someone who he goes to for advice before any of the others. I don't think he actually sees me as "leadership" but in a sense that is what he is looking for. Gerald only occasionally provides any leadership; Fred provides a lot of misleadership. Gerald needs leadership as much as Drew does. What this branch needs is someone who has real authority over him. I don't know if there is anyone in the tendency (except possibly yourself) who he would give that authority to.

"They all mistrust everyone. They make an assessment of someone's character and expect them to always act in accordance with this. They often assume that ideas are going to be opposed when they aren't - or oppose someone else's when they don't actually disagree. . . ."

When confronted with the evidence of her duplicity, Dorn claimed the report was "private correspondence" and registered mock indignation that we had "violated" her rights.

As comrades can see, Dorn's "private correspondence" is, in reality, a political report on the internal life of BABT—complete with the very characterizations and incorrect and incomplete information that we envisioned when Riker read her rights at the July 3rd meeting.

But Comrade Barbara is not the problem here. She is a very junior comrade who has been misled by older (more cynical) members who have used this poor woman to try an institute as a norm in our organization the kind of cult-procedure that was used in the Spartacist League. Dorn was sent to BABT to spy (nothing less) on BABT and to act as a factional agent of Logan/Riley.

This is outrageous behavior!

In effect what has happened here is that Comrade Smith, a full IEC member, and Comrade Riker, a former IEC member who was authorized (along with Harlan) to have all access to IEC correspondence and docu-

ments, have been excluded from the leadership of this organization. In effect, Smith has been expelled from the IEC without charges, trial or a vote. Pure, unadulterated, late-period Spartacism.

Riley and Logan have cynically used Comrade Dorn as their puppet in this affair and have both, miseducated this young comrade, and brought shame on themselves. The methods used by Logan/Riley are what we can be expected to do when we confront an opponent organization or suspect the presence of a police agent. Riker and Smith are neither. Both are long-time members of BT who have proved their loyalty to and made innumerable sacrifices for the organization for more than a decade.

After a discussion at the September 12th BABT local meeting (Dorn absent/sick), the local voted unanimously to put Dorn under discipline to turn over all reports that she had sent to Logan/Riley.

In a letter to the IEC dated Monday, September 14th Dorn says:

"Yesterday I was informed that the BABT local meeting held the previous day (which I did not attend due to illness) had unanimously passed the following motion:

'That Dorn is hereby under discipline to turn over all reports on BABT written to other locals/sections during her 2 trips here.

"The background to this is that at the previous meeting (which I did attend) in an agenda item entitled "Comrades' functioning" Fred gave a ten minute presentation in which he read out a private letter from me to Bill which he had somehow got hold of. This letter reported on some of the activities of the BABT and expressed some criticisms of individual comrades and the branch as a whole. There then followed three rounds of discussion, in which all four comrades accused me of unprincipled behaviour in daring not to show them this letter.

"During the course of this discussion Fred said that he had more than one letter of mine, although to my knowledge he has not shown further letters to all BABT comrades.

"I object strongly to this motion and to the other infringements of my right to private correspondence. I don't believe that the local has the authority to impose this kind of "discipline" which is clearly at odds with internal democracy. I ask the IS and IEC to consider whether this motion is appropriate.

"I have no 'reports on BABT written to other locals/sections' which the comrades do not already have access to. I have written letters to one or more individuals in the IBT which report on the activities of this local. I don't believe that the BABT has an automatic right to read such letters. In the current circumstances they have even less right. Other members of the IBT have attempted to engage comrades Smith and Riker in an open written discussion about the political issues at stake in their breach of democratic centralism over the publication of 1917 West. So far, they have not participated in this discussion.

"Private communication, both oral and written, is an important part of the functioning and democracy of our organisation and the history of our movement. So is open political discussion of our differences. Smith and Riker engage in the first; it is a pity they are doing little on an international level about the second.

"In the meantime I do not intend to comply in any way with the BABT motion. CGs Barbara"

This is a situation we cannot tolerate. All comrades in BABT are subject to the discipline of the Bay Area Local. That is one of the A B C's of democratic centralism.

In order to restore some modicum of confidence in the leadership and to prevent a complete breakdown of comradely behavior within the organization we demand that all of Dorn's reports be turned over to the leadership of the Bay Area local so that we can respond to the mis-characterizations and incorrect formulations in them.

We are asking for your support in this endeavor.

CG's
Riker/Smith

One Spartacist League Is Enough—Part II

Introduction

"In general, I must say the following: If the leadership wants to gain authority (and it is duty bound to want this) it must not proceed as if it already possesses unshatterable authority and must at first base itself as little as possible on its purely formal rights. The Executive must retain a quiet, friendly tone and show its utmost patience, especially towards its opponents. The Executive cannot gain any authority if it does not show in actuality to the entire organization its complete objectivity and conscientiousness in all sorts of conflicts and its concern about the organization as such. Only on this kind of authority, which cannot be achieved in one day, can organizational steps, disciplinary measures, etc., be based. Without this the organization cannot live. The attempt to use disciplinary measures without the necessary authority and without the conviction of the organization as to the correctness of these measures leads inevitably not to the strengthening of the organization but to its weakening, and above all to the collapse of the Executive itself." (Problems of the German Section, WLT [1930-31] pg. 143)

The present divergence of opinion within the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT) has developed into a generalized argument over exactly how our tendency should operate, how it should be run, how differences of opinion should be handled. In a phrase, the current discussion is on the concrete form of democratic centralism for a group our size and geographic dispersion.

The chain of events that led to this conflict has never been seriously discussed. In this document, the second of a series entitled One Spartacist League is Enough!, Riker and Smith with attempt to explain the origins of the dispute.

Why We Need 1917 West

Given the demonstrated inability of the "IS"/Editorial Board (EB) to regularly produce propaganda as an instrument for intervening in the most important political events of the day (as they are unfolding), it is imperative that every section of the IBT develop the capacity to generate communist propaganda.

To this end the BAPT decided to produce a local organ that would speak to issues and events that 1917 does not/could not possibly pay attention to, even if it were regularly produced (issues of interest to the youth, Black Question, local political phenomena).

The significant changes in the political landscape in the San Francisco Bay area from the collective point of the Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency (BAPT) are codified in the Tasks and Perspectives document we submitted to the International Tendency earlier this year. Without restating all of the arguments included in that document, it is necessary to reaffirm, against the unsolicited ravings of an "IS" with no political authority, (and its attorneys and fellow travelers), that the intent of our publishing of 1917 West is to help the BAPT to intersect and intervene in local political formations distinctive to the Bay Area.

Rights Versus Privileges in Building an International Tendency

The old BT, composed of the New York, Bay Area, Toronto, and Hamburg locals, died the day we fused with the Permanent Revolution Group of New Zealand (PRG). After the BT's fusion with the Group 4th International it should be clear the IBT is a very different organization than the earlier BT.

At the 1990 Berlin fusion conference (our most recent international conference) this transformation was concretized not only by the documents and resolutions adopted by the conference but by the presentations and discussions that both supplement and place the collectively arrived at agreements in context. Smith copied the tapes of this gathering and mailed them to all locals. To this day not a single IEC member has taken exception to the political motivations provided by comrade Logan, in support of the various resolutions and amendments. Since according to comrade Riley "silence equals consent" we think it is logical to conclude that Logans' interpretations of democratic centralism, as expressed at the conference represent a consensus of the IBT on this vital matter.

We Had Every Right Within the Democratic Centralist Norms

As Advocated by Logan to Publish Our Local Press

During the Berlin conference it was made abundantly clear that every national section of the IBT had the unconditional right to publish their independent organs, their national press. Some conditions however, were place on the content of the various organs projected for publication. For instance "Chairman" Logan had the following to say on the interrelationship between the press question and national autonomy of the sections of the IBT:

"The IEC delegation on behalf of the BT supports the thrust of the material prepared for the SPAD brochure by GIVI with the participation by Cde Harlan. Both parties to the fusion understand, that editorial work is required on the brochure. Both parties believe that any outstanding

political differences, can be resolved satisfactorily or if necessary, avoided in the brochure.

“If there are differences in the material to be included in the brochure, they should be resolved in terms of the national section’s right to determine its own propaganda subject to the political line of the tendency as determined by its leading bodies of the tendency.” (Our emphasis)

“National Section’s Right to Determine its own Propaganda”: these are the words of “Chairman Logan”, not Riker or Smith. And to our understanding there is a qualitative difference between a right and a privilege. If communists in Germany have these rights then certainly communists in the U.S.A. have these rights. What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.

Logan goes on to say:

“The background to this is that there is at this stage an outstanding difference on the value of the interview with Gunther. Cdes of the BT believe that this material would make very good propaganda. Cdes of the GIVI are not so sure.

“It would be improper for the international to insist that the German section publish line in a prescribed form. Whilst we have opinions and will argue for them, ultimately the journalistic form which the line is presented in is up to the national section with the proviso that the international can insist that the material which is published in fact represents the line of the international tendency.” (Our emphasis)

“Therefore, ultimately the national section could say: ‘no, we will not publish this interview.’ Of course the international might want to publish it in documents published by the IEC”.

We think that this is a reasonable policy, we agree with it. Smith agreed with it at the time. No one at the conference disagreed with it. No one since the conference has disagreed with it. What is the problem?

No requirement was discussed at this conference, or any other previous conference, that a financial budget or “written proposal” was the necessary prerequisite for the publication of the organ of any national section. None was asked for or given for the SPAD pamphlet, The German magazine nor the PRG’s Campus Bolshevik. Nor do we think there should have been.

We in the USA Are a National Section

While one could argue that it is ridiculous for a tiny international micro-propaganda organization of 40 people to have national sections, this was what was agreed to at the BT-GIVI fusion conference. But, since there are national sections—there is no reason why communists in Germany should have “rights” that are denied communists in the US. What’s good for the goose is good for the gander.

But our detractors have found, so they think, a means of denying this historically-derived reality. Let’s examine the self-degrading contortions that some of our “duly elected leaders” come up with in order to justify their false assertion that we do not constitute a national section.

Here is our self-proclaimed “political enemy” (poor thing) comrade Kalisch on this matter:

“The difference we have with comrade Riker and Smith is not that GS has more “rights” than BABT, but that they don’t see that the German section (or the PRG) exercises rightfully more (relative) autonomy than BABT in relationship to the IS, because the Germans are working in a “unique”, i.e. different national situation in comparison to North America and the implementation of our international line in Germany is different.

“That is not the case for BABT. The task of the Bay Area is not to form a national leadership on its own, but instead play an important role in such a national leadership. Otherwise the Bay Area would neglect the comrades in their own country (and I count Canada, although it has of course its national peculiarities, in relation to our needs and practicability today as basically an appendix to the US). Your primary task is building a North American section; i.e. you in the Bay Area together with the comrades in NY and in Toronto have to do this job. With a NATIONAL perspective, integrated into an international outlook, one has to organize the work in the Bay Area.

Say What?

Comrades should think what this would sound like if Riker and Smith said, “Oh well, all you German speaking people are really one nation. Austria is just “an appendage” of Germany so let’s not have any silly talk of a separate section for Austria.”

Ridiculous!

By the way, someone from Canada might inform comrade Kalisch that the majority of the people of Quebec do not speak English as their first language and don’t consider themselves an “appendage” of anyone. Not a single Canadian and not very many Americans, outside the ranks of the IBT would make such shameless and ignorant arguments! Be for real!

Canada, the Fifty-First State?????—Chairman Tom Speaks:

"In the first place the BABT is a local, and it is part of a North American section. It is not a section. Never in the whole tradition of our movement have locals had the status of national sections. No local in the SWP that I am aware of ever issued its own paper. Besides, Germany and New Zealand are very different places than North America, as anyone who has visited them knows. So it is no double standard for locals not to have the prerogatives of sections."

(Riley's "answer" to BABT
Local Meeting tape, 3-17-92).

While the majority of the comrades in the Logan/Riley gang are fond of posing as experts on the history and traditions of the international communist movement, we nevertheless think it is useful to point out that never in the history of the Fourth International or even in the Stalinized Comintern have Canadian and US communists be lumped in the same section.

These petty, wanna-be bureaucrats have the unmitigated gall to decree the existence of this new "section" without consulting, or even telling the members in the US. Talk about a shotgun wedding!

Actually, if it weren't so sad it would be funny. And, while it's necessary to take these edicts with a boulder of salt—in the end after all, it's only contretemps.

-0-

If eight comrades from Germany were sufficient to constitute a national section, then eight comrades in the USA with roughly comparable experience are sufficient to constitute a US section.

What's the difference? There is no real difference, save this: At this temporary juncture Kalish is in a bloc with his fleeting soul mate Riley. But, given the respective histories of these two men, it should be clear to Kalish that today's souls mate can rapidly become tomorrow's "political enemy". Case closed.

SUMMARY

We agree with comrade Logan's remarks at the fusion conference:

"It would be improper for the international to insist that the German section publish line in a prescribed form.

Or, we would add, any other national section.

No national section, including the US section, requires "permission" from the "IS", the IEC, or anybody else to produce propaganda containing our common line. Such requirements are chemically pure, unadulterated Robertsonism! We ain't for it.

CG's
Riker/Smith
September 26, 1992

Motions from the PRG on BABT Crisis—9/30/92

FROM: DAVID

TO: ALL POINTS

COPIES:

SUBJECT: MOTIONS ON BABT CRISIS

THE FOLLOWING THREE MOTIONS ON THE BABT CRISIS WERE PASSED AT THE 29 SEPTEMBER PRG MEETING.

I The PRG notes that comrades Smith and Riker's failure to endorse the following motion:

A prerequisite to productive internal discussion is that all comrades accept the discipline of the organisation as a whole, whether or not they agree with the constitution, composition or decisions of the higher bodies responsible for exerting that discipline.

The BABT recognises that in the IBT as presently constituted the IS has full power to direct the activities of the BABT - as of all other sections and branches of the IBT - subject to the over-riding authority of the IEC.

indicates their opposition to the basic principles of democratic centralism and Bolshevism, which, if continued, will take them outside the IBT.

For: PRG - Adaire, Alan, Andrew, Carol, David, Dub, Janine Jos, Keir, Marcus, Mike, Nicci(candidate), Peter, Rory, Sari(candidate), Spike

BC - Karen, Martin, Rachel

Against:

Abstentions:

Not voting:

Passed unanimously

2The PRG reaffirms the right of comrades to internal private political correspondence and endorses the position taken by the IS in upholding Dorn's appeal against the BAPT.

For: PRG - Adaire, Alan, Andrew, Carol, David, Dub, Janine Jos, Keir, Marcus, Mike, Nicci(candidate), Peter, Rory, Sari(candidate), Spike

BC - Karen, Martin, Rachel

Against:

Abstentions:

Not voting:

Passed unanimously

3Smith and Riker's document, entitled 'The Regime Question', has been read by PRG members and discussed at this meeting. The private correspondence between Logan, Riley and Dorn over the last period has been made necessary by the actions of the BAPT and has been entirely appropriate.

For: PRG - Adaire, Alan, Andrew, Carol, David, Dub, Janine Jos, Keir, Marcus, Mike, Nicci(candidate), Peter, Rory, Sari(candidate), Spike

BC - Karen, Martin, Rachel

Against:

Abstentions:

Not voting:

Passed unanimously

Money and its Evils—10/2/92

FROM: Riker

TO: IEC

SUBJECT: Money and its evils

COPIES: All Points

(Excerpt)

Dear Cdes,

Comrades may remember the dispute last spring between Riley and I over who was to pay the costs of producing 1917 No. 11. I thought perhaps it would be instructive to recapitulate that exchange in the light of subsequently revealed facts.

Money in the old BT, pre-fusions BT, was (except for its short supply) never really a bone of contention. Usually BABT paid for the printing of the magazine while Toronto and NY paid for other expenses for the tendency as a whole. On other occasions, NY paid for the printing of the magazine and BABT paid for other things, etc. etc.

It is only recently, when Riley felt that the propaganda we wanted produce here that was more in tune with the milieu we work with was going to "compete" with (his) 1917, that money became such a hot question. (His attempts at sabotaging the production of 1917W will be documented in Smith's and my next installment of the "One Spartacist League Is Enough" series that has met with such critical acclaim from comrades).

We suspected last spring that Riley, (and his two clones on the IS), had adopted an attitude of trying to drain off as much money from the treasury of BABT as possible, (thereby to prevent more issues of 1917W), while preserving the treasury's of TBT and NYBT for projects that met with official favor.

That became obvious to us here that this was true when in early May, Riley sent the page flats of 1917 to BABT to be printed, and I as treasurer, asked him (through Nason, TBT treasurer) a question that seemed perfectly reasonable to us: "Where is the money to come from to pay for 1917? (see Appendix No. 1, below). Comrades will note that the tone of the letter was friendly, polite and comradely. I took pains to point out that BABT had spent a considerable amount of money subsidizing Logan's (factional) trip from Wellington to BABT. We uncompromisingly paid half his air fare and his entire stipend while he was here.

Silence. No answer was ever received from Nason, Riley or any other member of the IS or the IEC although each received a copy.

Later, on May 7th, I put a letter on Compuserve to all IEC members and alts asking facetiously if everyone in the IEC had died or had suddenly gone deaf, i.e. why was no one answering my request for this information (see Appendix No. 2, below).

Participants in this dispute (such as Cde Logan), who prattle on about how Riker and Smith should have "appealed to the IEC if they didn't agree with an IS decision" should note that neither Riley/Nason nor any member the IEC have ever responded to the letter of May 7th.

Despite these irregularities on the part of the IS, in due course BABT paid the bill (over \$2,000 U.S.) and shipped the magazine out to the locals. Then, finally on June 20th (nearly two months later) in the IS minutes (No. 25), there is a terse, if somewhat cryptic remark:

"... We think it reasonable that each branch should reimburse BABT for the shipping costs of 1917 #11. We also think that BABT should pay for the production costs of this issue in full, since it is the branch that can best afford to do so."

Again (as the treasurer) I wrote Riley on July 8th (copies to all IS and IEC members), and asked how the determination that BABT "is the branch that can best afford" to pay for 1917 was made (see Appendix No. 3, below).

Silence. Once again, no member of either the IS or the IEC ever answered this letter.

Finally, Cde. Boyd, the BABT local organizer, mentioned in a phone conversation with Riley that I would like our correspondence answered particularly concerning the question of paying for 1917. Riley replied: "Who the fuck is Riker?". This attitude for us seemed to say: "Why should I, the Great Pooh-Bah Riley, have to answer a mere local treasurer when spending money under his care?" Believe me comrades, this is not calculated to keep tempers cool and calm in BABT.

Frustrated and furious at such bureaucratic arrogance, Smith who had been consulted on all the previous correspondence, sent a letter on July 12 with copies to all IEC members complaining about Riley's refusal to turn over financial documents. The letter said, in part:

"It has been brought to my attention by Comrade Boyd that Comrade Riley is attempting to legitimize his grossly undemocratic and undisciplined behavior, i.e. his refusal to forward the financial reports to the

BABT, with the slimy and chickenshit assertion that he has not answer our numerous requests because the letters were signed by Riker and not by Smith. This is either idiot formalism or a gross betrayal of his responsibilities as a leading member of this organization.

"As an IEC member I demand that he send these reports immediately to the BABT, addressed to me."

What did Riley send back? A financial report from the PRG that was seven months old and two from the Hamburg local of the GS that were nine months old (see Appendix No. 4).

This, of course, did not answer my question as to how he determined that the BABT was "the branch that can best afford to" pay for the printing of 1917.

Subsequently, after much pressuring on the part of Riker/Smith and much stonewalling on Riley's part, Riley's bloc partner, Cde. Logan (who opined that we had the "right" to have the information), offered to try to get the relevant financial records, which Smith (and every member of this tendency) is entitled to see. At this juncture Riker and Smith made the point that the "right" to the financial documents was about on the par with the "right" of black people to vote in the white south—a "right" that existed only in the abstract since our requests were being ignored. The membership of this organization or any organization has no rights that it is not willing to militantly defend against the Jim Robertson wanna-bes of the world.

Any political organization in which the leadership refuses to show the financial records to the members is an organization that is in serious trouble. That is how (as we've said repeatedly) Jim Robertson got to fly to Europe on the Concorde and have unlimited access to the cash box on Warren Street—something we can not and will not tolerate again.

When the financial records finally did arrive on September 24th (nearly 5 months after first requested) it was clear what Riley was trying so hard to hide: Germany has DM3,600; Toronto—C\$4,742; BABT—\$2,902.94 and NYBT—\$4,306.79 (there was no recent financial report available from the PRG).

So, either Riley was lying and didn't know who could "best afford" to pay for the printing of 1917, and falsified the IEC minutes (No. 25), or he was lying when he told us the only reports he had were the mouldy ones he sent on July 13th. In any event he is a liar! He is certainly guilty of trying to hide the financial condition of the organization from the membership.

Comrades should keep this in mind when evaluating the two sides in the dispute over 1917W and how it got printed. We have told the truth from the beginning.

CG's
Riker

Appendix No. 1

Letter to Nason, 5/5/92

...

Appendix No. 2

Letter to IS/IEC, 5/7/92

...

Appendix No. 3

Letter to IS/IEC, 7/8/92

DATE: July 8, 1992

...

Appendix No. 4

Letter from Riley to Smith, dated 7/13/92.

Reply to Cde. Riker on Finances

2 October 1992

Toronto

First to correct some of your mistaken impressions. The bulk of the expenses for 1917 and the ET Bulletins, etc. were traditionally paid for by Cleveland, Toronto and later New York branch. Only since the fusion has the Bay Area branch been picking up the costs. The Bay Area has historically not been the milk cow financially and, in fact, cost the ET/BT a lot of money over the years. Of course it has also been the site of much of our most important work. It is rather incongruous that given your historic complaints (along with Comrade Smith) about the infrequency of 1917, that you should now be complaining about the small outlay required for what has become a mere one issue per year.

1917 is our tendency's major political organ. It is our international face and our main propaganda tool. 1917 West is a qualitatively inferior local (not national) publication. As such it was not considered, by the elected leadership of the organization, to be worth offset printing instead of xeroxing. This is where this dispute began. You and Cde. Smith went behind the organization's back and spent this money contrary to the instructions of the organization and even contrary to the instructions of the branch. This should tell every member all they need to know both about your attitude toward the proper use of organizational funds and your much bally-hoed expertise on democratic centralism. You defied the decision of the organization on both the international and branch level because you felt like it and because as the treasurer entrusted with the funds you had access to them. The fact that Cde. Smith (an IEC member) was involved in your conspiracy to defy democratic centralism not make it any better. All it signals is that Cde. Smith does not any longer belong on the IEC, if he ever did.

In reading your rather intemperate remarks on the handling of the financing of the press of the IBT (which, by the way, when it does come out is a paper which every Trotskyist can be proud of) it is striking how your approach is restricted to the level of the local. This parallels the devolution of your concept of revolutionary organization into the view that an international tendency should really be no more than a federated conglomeration of autonomous local branches.

The question of "draining" money from BABT has two aspects.

1) Given our desire to try to have a political discussion, rather than simply resorting to organizational measures against your deliberate and conscious disloyalty to the organization, we felt that it was at least appropriate that a local that thought it had enough money to do a flashy printing job on a local paper with a circulation of 300 or so, could and should be tapped for money for the publication of the world's best Trotskyist journal. This became all the more obvious when we discovered that you had misappropriated funds without authorization for your pet project.

2) As it happens (with Cdes. Riker and Smith both paying pledges on relatively highly skilled jobs, and some substantial contributions from former BT and SL members in the area) the BABT has indeed in the recent past been the local with the highest monthly income and the one therefore which could "best afford" to pay. That remains the case today.

If we compare the latest available figures on monthly SP's and donations between BABT, TBT, NYBT and Germany we find that the average income per month from April to June for BABT is \$1333; for TBT (August) it is C\$462 (converts to about \$370 at current exchange rates) for NYBT (average of July and August) \$300 and for Germany (average of January and February) DM914 (converts at current rates to something like \$600).

So much for the Cde. Riker's case that Cde. Riley is guilty of "lying" on the question of who could "best afford" to pay for the printing. It is simply fallacious. If the financial situation of the BABT is the same at the time of the publication of the next issue of our paper as it was last April, the IS would no doubt want to make the same decision—simply on the grounds of ability to pay. Besides, only a localist cretin would think it necessary to send money from Toronto, which has to be converted with a cut going to the moneychangers, or even to send a check from NY that has to wait a week to be cleared, when the money is already sitting in an IBT account in the branch where the paper is printed.

Because of the parochial anti-Leninist view of comrades Riker and Smith on the question they seem to miss the main point: all of the money of all of the branches belongs to the tendency as a whole. If they do not like that concept they have the right to build a faction to try to change it at the next conference to the principle of local control. But they do not have the right to dishonestly and undemocratically divert the money of the organization into their own pet projects, as they did last March with 1917 West.

As for Cde. Riker's wounded vanity regarding a lack of response to his letters we would make the following observations:

1) Cde. Riker has no standing in the IEC and as such is not entitled to ask for or receive financial reports. His letter of 7 May came at a time when the IS had more pressing matters to attend to. The concerns he raised were dealt with at a meeting the next month (20 June) which, given the fact that there was no urgent or immediate need for resolution (as there were no concrete plans for printing the next issue at that point), was time enough.

(We would note that during this period the BABT waited several weeks before getting around to sending out the issue to the other locals and sections. But Cde. Riker is not so worried about that delay). It should also be noted for the record that Cde. Riley did not ask Boyd "Who the fuck is Riker" as he knew very well by this point not only who Cde. Riker was, but also what he had become.

2) Cde. Smith, as an IEC member, is entitled to receive financial reports, but until July did not request them. After sending his letter of 12 July Cde. Smith phoned Cde. Riley the next day and in the course of the discussions specifically requested the reports from Germany (and particularly Hamburg) and also from the PRG. Riley, who was going on holidays the next day, told Cde. Smith that the reports were not all that current but that he would send him the most recent ones immediately available. They were sent within hours of Cde. Smith's verbal request. Cde. Smith received the reports and made no subsequent complaint that the reports he had asked for had not come.

For those who are interested in such things, please note Cde. Riker whining:

"I wrote Riley on July 8th (copies to all IS and IEC members), and asked how the determination that BABT 'is the branch that can best afford' to pay for 1917 was made (see Appendix No. 3, below).

"Silence. Once again, no member of either the IS or the IEC ever answered this letter."

If he would read Riley's letter to Cde. Smith that he appended to his own document he would see quite clearly the request to "PLEASE SHOW FRED THE POINT IN THE MINUTES OF THE IS MEETING NO. 26 (WHICH I HAVE ALSO SENT OUT) ON THE POLICY REGARDING ACCESSIBILITY OF THE REPORTS." This was the point which explained that the reports were for IEC members only, i.e., not for Riker. The determination was made by the IS on behalf of the IEC.

Cde. Riker, who refused to stand for the IEC, apparently thinks that he should have access to everything IEC members have access to. This is of a piece with his notion that there should be no distinction between IEC members and new recruits when it comes to the availability of information within the organization. This is the same comrade who for months (from January until March) thought it extremely shrewd tactically to refuse to answer the repeated requests and instructions of the elected leading bodies.

If the comrades feel strongly that all financial information must in principle be made available to every comrade at every moment, they are entitled to argue for that (mistaken) view and to try to win enough support to make that the view of the organization. But in the interim the policy developed by the elected leadership must stand.

Cde. Smith was so abusive, offensive and making such (to be charitable) absurd allegations in his phone call of 27 August (which was the first time he brought up the question of financial reports again since their conversation of 13 July) that Riley eventually after trying to reason with the comrade told him, quite properly, that if he wanted to make a request he should put it in writing and that any written request would be answered. Comrades who know Cde. Smith know how abusive and irrational he can be at times. Cde. Riley simply told Cde. Smith that he was not prepared to hear any more of Cde. Smith's abuse on the question and that he would ignore anything not in writing. Cde. Smith never made a request in writing, and Riley wrote up an account of the conversation and included a report of what he had told Cde. Smith in it. So it was all out in the open.

Cde. Riker puffs himself up and delivers the following bit of wisdom:

"Any political organization in which the leadership refuses to show the financial records to the members is an organization that is in serious trouble."

He goes on to say that this is the road to Robertsonite corruption. We are prepared to argue our case before the elected delegates at the next IBT conference and they will make the final determination. Cde. Smith told Cde. Riley last August that he and Cde. Riker are not planning on attending that conference (a point which Riley reported in his letter of 27 August along with Cde. Smith's favorable attitude toward the social democratic reformist Socialist Action). No comment from Cde. Smith on either of these rather significant points.

Cde. Riker might not agree but it is our view that any organization in which a treasurer spends money that he is not entitled to, on a pet project that is not authorized by the appropriate bodies, because he happens to personally feel like it, is an organization which will be in serious trouble if it does not deal with the root of such a problem and, at least eventually, take measures to ensure that the treasury of the organization remains the property of the organization. For an organization that will long tolerate such disloyal and dishonest behavior is indeed headed for serious trouble.

Bolshevik greetings,
Nason/Riley
2 October 1992

Motions by Logan to Settle BABT Dispute—10/3/92

From: Bill (Bay Area)

To: All members

Copies: All points

Subject: Today's branch meeting

Dear comrades,

On Wednesday I had given the comrades here notice of four motions I intended to move at the meeting, as follows.

1 The organisational status of the North American units of the IBT has never been established. At present each branch is directly subordinate to the IS and the IEC. There is a difference on whether they should be organised as a single North American section or as a Canadian and a US section. Discussion on this difference should continue, and a decision should be made at the next international conference.

2 Any full branch or section has the right to produce its own propaganda. This right is not absolute, but subject to the following conditions.

a The membership internationally has the right to discuss any major tactical decision planned by any branch before the branch makes its decision (insofar as possible, depending on the urgency of the matter).

b Propaganda must conform to the line and perspectives of the international as a whole.

c The international as a whole has the right to limit, or in unusual circumstances veto, major expenditures of human or financial resources.

3 The financial policies which emerged from the fusion conferences of 1990 make all money held by all units of the organisation the property of the international organisation as a whole. OCs, branches and sections are custodians of all money, subject to the direction of higher bodies. The forthcoming international conference should seek to establish more detailed guidelines on the financial relationships between branches and sections on the one hand and the international organisation on the other.

4 Any international leadership should encourage initiatives in the branches consistent with the programme and perspectives of the tendency, and should not unreasonably drain branches of the funds necessary to carry out such initiatives. Branch initiatives may also involve fundraising outside the membership for special local projects. The international leadership should not frustrate such initiatives by insisting that funds so raised be devoted to projects outside the branch.

However, the contributions of established financial supporters of the international tendency and its programme are more akin to the general income of the organisation than to income generated through special initiatives. While a proportion of this money should appropriately be devoted to branch needs, it is not appropriate for a branch to circumvent the central control of funds by claiming a general right over such money for local projects.

Yesterday Gerald rang me, saying he and Fred supported these motions as part of the basis for a settlement of the disputes here. They proposed the following four additional points, and I discussed these with Gerald, and then discussed them again with Gerald and Fred, immediately before the meeting this morning:-

1 That there be no North American Section, or that the question be decided by referendum among the United States comrades.

I rejected this on the basis that I was not in a position to bind an international conference which had the right to make a decision on what sections it would recognise.

2 That Fred be accorded emeritus membership on his resignation.

I rejected this on the basis that this status, which gives full internal rights including the right to attend meetings, was not appropriate for someone of working age and health, and who was capable of carrying out the duties of a member. I said this would create a category of Menshevik membership for senior members.

3 That Barbara had to leave the Bay Area.

I rejected this as unjustified. I said that if the BABT were to vote a resolution which declared her unwelcome she might want to leave.

5 That there be no reprisals against them.

I said that if we could come to a satisfactory agreement there would be no reprisals, but that a satisfactory agreement must include an acceptance of the power of the IS to make binding decisions on them.

Early in this morning's meeting was an item "Correspondence". In that item there was discussion of Fred's letter on finances and Cathy and Tom's reply (both 2 October 1992).

This discussion became most heated, with Fred and Gerald throwing around their usual insults and expletives and their repeated accusations of lying by Tom. All other comrades opposed the suggestion that Tom had been lying.

Barbara referred to Fred and Gerald's taking of *1917 West* to the printer contrary to the IS instruction to first circulate a proposal. She described this as a "misappropriation". Fred and Gerald exploded. Barbara said she would explain what she meant. I took a point of order - the meeting was at this point spectacularly disorderly - in which I said that the word "misappropriation" did not necessarily suggest personal gain. Fred and Gerald demanded the word be withdrawn. It was not. They walked out. A few minutes later Gerald returned. Fred did not. Barbara made it quite clear - although it had never been in question - that she made no accusation of stealing money for personal gain.

(I note in the Webster beside the desk here that misappropriate is listed as meaning: "1. to put to wrong use. 2. to apply wrongfully or dishonestly, as funds entrusted to one's care.")

In following discussion comrades remarked on the disproportionate sensitivity of Fred and Gerald to language which they objected to, when they habitually use the most intemperate language.

The following agenda item involved discussion on my motions. I also reported on my discussions with Fred and Gerald on their conditions for a settlement. Gerald said that these points would be motivated at the next meeting, and supported my motions. Drew and Barbara pointed out the contradictions between Gerald's support for my motions and his votes on the motions at the previous branch meeting (with regard to democratic centralism). I stressed that we had an impossible and unworkable situation while the comrades were on record as being unwilling to accept the decisions of the IS as binding. I called on Gerald to put on record at the meeting a statement accepting the decisions of the IS. He did not make such a statement.

The motions were passed unanimously. Another motion, moved by Drew, demanding that Gerald stop calling Barbara a bitch, was also put, and passed. Gerald abstained.

CGs
Bill

Letter from Adaire to Smith/Riker—10/4/92

To: Smith and Riker

From: Adaire

Copies: All points

Subject: BABT situation

Dear Comrades

I have listened twice to the tapes of your 1 September 1992 meeting and read *The Regime Question* and *One Spartacist League is Enough Part II* and feel that I cannot remain silent.

Riker finishes the section of the 1 September meeting on private correspondence with the following flourish:

"... you [Barbara] should examine what you have done - that what kind of a personal betrayal and how much it's gonna take before we trust you again.

This is because Barbara wrote to comrades she politically agreed with privately about her thoughts on the BABT situation. But comrade Riker seems oblivious to the betrayal of trust he and Smith committed when they published *1917 West* without fulfilling the requirements of the IS and, more recently, by voting against a motion that upholds democratic centralism.

Comrade Smith also lets Dom know what he thinks of her now that he knows of her private political correspondence:

Other people that find out what happened that aren't even involved in this will not respect, they will never trust you, they won't want to talk to you because they know you are a fucking snitch. Nobody likes a snitch.

In a communist organisation there are no "snitches". The concept of snitching and democratic centralism are incompatible. Breaches of democratic centralism have to be reported. Comrade Dom's private political correspondence was a direct result of your, and comrade Riker's, flagrant breach of democratic centralism and refusal to respect the discipline of the organisation. Comrade Dom, as any politically responsible comrade in the given situation, acted as the agent of the IBT.

In the workforce any workers who snitch on other workers to the boss or the boss' agents are snitches — their low consciousness is being manipulated for the employer's benefit. In a revolutionary organisation there are no boss-employee relationships — the party is our party.

Smith and Riker make a big deal of not trusting anybody yet it is their actions and words that have shown that it is they who are not to be trusted.

Riker earlier in the meeting told Dom

"... you could learn something from me and that is how to function in a principled fashion in an organisation ...

Once upon a time this statement would have been true but it is outrageous gall in light of what has

happened this year. What is your recent record of 'function[ing] in a principled fashion in an organisation'? You refused to comply with the requirements of the IS regarding *1917 West* and published it in such a hurry because Logan was about to arrive that you left off the union bug and inadequately proofread the copy. You have until now refused to document your differences with the organisation preferring to stand on the sidelines and send abusive (nasties) notes to people who dare to disagree or question you. You interrupt comrades speaking time on rounds when you don't like what they have to say - listen to yourself on tape. And most egregious of all actions you voted against a motion that upholds democratic centralism.

No, comrade Riker, Dorn and junior comrades in New Zealand and Germany at this point of time will not learn principled functioning from you.

Another aspect of your double standards of functioning can be seen if we counterpose a motion put at the BABT meeting of 20 September with a statement from 'The Regime Question'.

A prerequisite to productive internal discussion is that all comrades accept the discipline of the organisation as a whole, whether or not they agree with the constitution, composition or decisions of the higher bodies responsible for exerting that discipline.

The BABT recognises that in the IBT as presently constituted the IS has full power to direct the activities of the BABT—as of all other sections and branches of the IBT - subject to the over-riding authority of the IEC

For: Drew, Barbara, Bill

Against: Fred, Gerald

All comrades in BABT are subject to the discipline of the Bay Area Local. That is one of the A B C's of democratic centralism. (from The Regime Question)

What's good for the goose is good for the gander? Apparently not. If democratic centralism is alive and well in the Bay Area BT where you run things then by the same token, democratic centralism lives in the international and you are subject to the discipline of the IS.

Smith and Riker, supported by Boyd and Trent, at the 1 September meeting were outraged at the private political correspondence between comrades who abide by the democratic centralism norms of the IBT yet on 21 September Riker and Smith sent The Regime Question document to David and Marcus requesting that it be held in confidence for 24 hours. They are quite happy to use the right of private political correspondence when it suits them.

In order for them to get support for their positions they had to send their document to people they thought might support them just as any pre-factional grouping does in order to establish a faction. Without the right to private political correspondence a faction cannot be established as Robertson so well knew. The SL insisted that all private political correspondence was shown to the organisation and the motion you passed demanding Barbara hand over all her private political correspondence sounded very similar. So who is trying to bring Spartacism in through the back door? The very comrades who, everytime they see a spectre they don't like, hold up the talisman of Spartacism to ward it off!

National sections

Riker and Smith in their second document have a subhead that says: "WE IN THE USA ARE A NATIONAL SECTION". They obviously think it is ridiculous to have national sections but since there are national sections — there is no reason why communists in Germany should have "rights" that are denied communists in the US. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

(One Spartacist League is Enough - Part II)

Unfortunately for Riker and Smith Berlin has not forgotten to include Harnburg in its section and its press isn't entitled *Bolshevik East!*

But let's return to the tapes of the 1 September meeting.

Comrade Riker says:

"Patently ridiculous for 25 people in the entire world to belong to an organisation to have national sections - but German's got national autonomy - patently ridiculous but, but, but if they can have national autonomy there is no fucking reason in the entire world why the Bay Area [sic] can't have national autonomy. We, along with the New Yorkers, are the only members of the IBT of the United States — we show them how stupid they were by drawing it to its logical conclusion and we said — national section in the United States and its going to have a paper, *1917 West* ...

I have seen no evidence of collaboration between the Bay Area and the New York comrades in the publication of *1917 West* which is a ridiculous name for a national journal of the United States. I am unaware of any national executive elected by a national conference and so the 'slip' of the tongue by Riker in the tapes is not an accident. What Riker and Smith really want is national autonomy for the Bay Area.

“Paper’s Forever”

Comrade Smith at the 1 September meeting announces

So **once** you put that shit on paper its a different ball game and its on paper now babe [Dom], its on paper and paper’s **forever**.

And **so** are tapes.

Comrade Smith says early in the meeting of 1 September that Tom is a liar. He said that Bob Mandel had told him Tom **was** a liar but Tom’s supposed lie about the history of the BAPT clinched the matter.

I **abhor** the calling of comrades ‘liars’ lightly so when I hear a comrade saying someone is a liar I take it very seriously indeed. We cannot run an international tendency with comrades claiming other comrades are liars and just go on with the next business at hand. Such accusations that are not dealt with in the proper fashion bred distrust and eventually destroy an organisation.

At the BT/PRG fusion there was an election of an international leadership and I did not hear any such comments about Tom. It is irresponsible to bring up the accusation now unless the comrades provide the proof and ask the organisation to make a decision on the issue.

I do **not** want to be in an organisation where comrades feel they can say whatever they like and not have to act on such serious accusations. If the accusation was as serious as the comrades imply now then it should have been politically dealt with at the time.

I am **not** sure if comrade Smith is aware how petty he comes across when he criticises comrade Riley for putting his version of a telephone conversation with comrade Smith in writing. Smith obviously feels that Riley has misrepresented him on a number of points and reacts subjectively:

“... I can spend my time fucking around with a little piece of shit like that or I can talk to Rachel, Careen, Mike and other people who want to learn something ...

“I will debate a liar ... if there’s something to get out of it — stakes aren’t high ... with this particular liar ...

“.. that’s not writing off the membership, it’s just recognising the membership’s pretty low level — if the membership don’t catch it — what the fuck? — there’s nothing there ...”

Where do you start with arguments such as these?

First, as an IEC member you have a responsibility to put your political ideas on paper (or tape) especially when you are challenging the rest of the IEC on issues. Riley acted as a responsible comrade let alone an IEC member by documenting the telephone discussion from his point of view and circulating it. Your responsibility was to do the same. Riley invited you to put your point of view for everyone to read. It was obvious that the conversation was controversial and the only way to get any clarification was to document the two sides and thereby make the thing open, above board, for everyone to see. You make accusations of behind the scene scheming but Riley was upfront. It is you that has not been upfront to the membership.

Secondly, you say “the membership’s pretty low level” thereby justifying not putting your case to them. How low can you go? If the membership (outside the BAPT) was “pretty low” it would never get any better with you and Riker as the tutors because you abstain from the teaching. However, now that the chips are down you have sent out documents to that “pretty low level” membership for support!

What any right-minded member hears when they listen to the arguments above is that you and Riker realise just how pathetic your arguments really are and that you seek to cover this up by claiming the membership is too ignorant to appreciate your political critique. That “pretty low level” membership, however, came up with the correct line on the Russian coup and Yugoslavia — with little help from you — which is a pretty contradiction, comrades.

Thirdly, the last time I heard a senior comrade say that they would rather talk to non members [I take it that Rachel, Careen and Mike are contacts] who want to learn was when I was a junior member of the SLNZ. Comrade Gager broke democratic centralism and justified it on the basis that the periphery was better than the membership. This was the basis for the disintegration of the SLNZ in 1971 and the loss of good comrades to the movement.

“Communist Propaganda with their fucking political line”

“... if you take as legitimatizing everything you do the fact that we produce communist propaganda with their [sic (emphasis added)] fucking political line in it and we’re spreading the program that we all agreed to and they take that as such a principled violation that it justifies this? [private correspondence] I mean where’s that take ya? That’s cult city, motherfucker, that’s cult city. That’s the fucking Spartacist League and I’d told you motherfuckers from the beginning that we ain’t going to have no two Spartacist Leagues — or, or another Spartacist League Australia/New Zealand. We ain’t going to have one of them neither. That’s all I’ve got

to say”.

Comrade Riker, no one would be arguing with you for producing communist propaganda with our “fucking political line” if you had put a written proposal to the IS as was requested. You throw so much sand around that you hope to screen your own shortcomings. Well we ain’t blinded.

Subsequently, the BABT is producing propaganda that isn’t our political line eg the Copwatch edited reprint. The labour party intervention was not acceptable and it was unacceptable because you will not work collaboratively.

For the record it is important to point out that *1917 West* was edited by the Editorial Board of the IBT adding to the delay in putting out *1917* number 11. Of course, the comrades involved in the Bay Area chose to ignore some of the editing eg the IceCube article, putting the feelings of a contact above the interests of the party.

Cultism

Comrade Smith expands on Riker’s charge of ‘cult city’:

Cultism ... you train people that this the way to build a motherfucker organisation so that it replicates itself like the blob [?] or some other virus. That’s the fucking problem.

When you look behind the words there is no substance - it’s all hot air. Comrades, until now you have abstained from educating the membership by your refusal to debate. You insult the membership by putting everyone down who dares to challenge you and, to boot, say they are not worth fighting for but I’m afraid comrades that when the membership listen to your taped interventions in meetings, read *1917 West* and the Copwatch edited reprint, and now read your documents they are not impressed. The content is not there. In true bureaucratic style you want to blame the calibre of the receiver for your lack of support. Well, I suggest you look carefully and objectively at your output.

Spartacism

I continually hear this wild accusation but frankly it is a smokescreen. Comrades, your tone and content are reminiscent of the SL. Comrade Riker at the 1 September meetings said as an aside that New Zealand was the centre of sheep struggle and that the Bay Area was the centre of class struggle. This was struck by the Chair, comrade Trent, but it is indicative of the level of comrade Riker’s political programme and reminded me of Robertson’s infamous putdown - ‘nation of goat fuckers’.

There are two levels of meaning in this aside: the first that the PRG mindlessly follow Logan and the second that the Bay Area comrades are superior because they engage in the class struggle - they ain’t no petty bourgeois pointy heads.

Comrades in the PRG have done some excellent work in their unions and if this dispute had not taken so much of my political time the IBT, including the Bay Area, would have received a report of my work in my union. Like comrade Riker, I am working alone in my union - there are no other communists — but I have a degree of support from union members. But, being part of the class is no protection from straying from the revolutionary path.

Yes, comrade Logan has real authority in the PRG, authority he has earned and, like every revolutionary leader, he has to constantly re-earn that authority. We aren’t afraid of being challenged by comrades. We know that through political struggle we will reach the correct line and build a strong organisation. There are no sheep or woolly thinkers here, comrades.

Smear Tactics

As to the insinuation that there is a potential threat of a second Spartacist League of Australia/New Zealand comrade Riker is obviously scraping the bottom of the barrel to defend his indefensible programme. Insinuations are a substitute for hard facts, comrade and discredit you and your bloc partner(s).

Smith said he waited for Riley and Logan to get “reckless”, that he’d “let them fuck up” and “let them expose themselves” before documenting his arguments. Well, you are doing a good job of “exposing” yourselves. The membership of this organisation deserves greater political regard and if you want to win any political credibility you had better front up with the goods.

Comradely
Adaire

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/5/93 (#31)

FOR IEC

(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) New York Info, 2) Montreal, 3) Argentina, 4) BABT

Re 4):

We once again discussed the urgent necessity to sort out a serious situation in the BABT. The following two motions were passed:

MOTION NO. 1

Currently in the BABT there is a serious question of whether some comrades in the local, including the treasurer Comrade Riker, are prepared to recognize the fundamentals of Leninist organization. Evidence of this is provided by his vote against the following motion at the September 19 meeting of the local:

"A prerequisite to productive internal discussion is that all comrades accept the discipline of the organisation as a whole, whether or not they agree with the constitution, composition or decisions of the higher bodies responsible for exerting that discipline."

"The BABT recognises that in the IBT as presently constituted the IS has full power to direct the activities of the BABT - as of all other sections and branches of the IBT - subject of the over-riding authority of the IEC."

It will be impossible to successfully carry out the work of the IBT (eg. organizing the financing of our first delegated international conference) without establishing strict, centralized control of the finances of the organization.

Accordingly, the IS, acting as the executive arm of the IEC, directs the BABT treasurer to forward a full and complete current financial report to the IS by 11 October so that the IS may determine the size of a forthcoming financial transfer from the treasury of the BABT to an IS/IEC account to be held in New York.

The BABT treasurer should expect to receive a notification of exactly how much money is to be transferred on or before 13 October and be prepared to transfer the funds on or before 15 October.

The primary immediate purpose of the IS/IEC account will be to begin to accumulate funds to assist in financing the upcoming conference. We anticipate adding surpluses accumulated in NYBT and perhaps also TBT. Any funds received from other sections will also be held in this account, to be used as directed by the IEC.

This measure is only a preliminary step, but obviously an overdue one, in our struggle for the necessary Leninist centralization of the IBT. We endorse the following observation contained in a motion passed in the BABT branch meeting on 3 October:

"The forthcoming international conference should seek to establish more detailed guidelines on the financial relationships between branches and sections on the one hand and the international organisation on the other."

MOTION NO. 2

We note the disparity between IEC member Smith's vote on the authority of the IS (and by implication, the IEC) at the BABT local meeting of 19 September and his vote on a substantially similar motion at the 3 October BABT local meeting.

The September 19 motion read as follows:

"A prerequisite to productive internal discussion is that all comrades accept the discipline of the organisation as a whole, whether or not they agree with the constitution, composition or decisions of the higher bodies responsible for exerting that discipline."

"The BABT recognises that in the IBT as presently constituted the IS has full power to direct the activities of the BABT - as of all other sections and branches of the IBT - subject to the over-riding authority of the IEC."

For: Drew, Barbara, Bill

Against: Fred, Gerald.

Comrade Smith put forward the following motion, clearly designed as a counterposition to the motion which he had voted against:

"Ritual motions which on the surface seem to be for Apple-pie and Motherhood have no place in this discussion. The Logan motion is a cynical attempt to provide a moral and political jus-

tification for any measures which the 'IS' may care to carry out in future."

For: Gerald, Fred.

Against: Barbara, Bill

Abstaining: Drew

The relevant portion of the October 3 motion, which was unanimously passed with Comrade Smith voting in favor, read as follows:

"The organisational status of the North American units of the IBT has never been established. At present each branch is directly subordinate to the IS and the IEC."

The resulting confusion presents us with a situation which is intolerable in a Leninist organization. It is essential that Smith, once and for all, and in writing, make clear his position on the responsibility of every IBT members (including and especially himself as well as all other BABT members) to carry out the instructions and abide by the decisions of the IS.

If, by 10 October (that is, 72 hours after these minutes are sent to the BABT) Comrade Smith is unwilling to declare clearly and unambiguously in writing that he will henceforth carry out the decisions and instructions of the IS, which is the executive arm of the IEC, the authoritative elected leadership of the IBT, then the IS proposes to recommend to the IEC that he be immediately suspended from the IEC, and that a discussion be opened within the IEC on what, if any, further measures are necessary. Minutes submitted 6 October, approved 7 October

Threat in the Bay Area—10/5/92

To: IS (Toronto & New York)

Dear comrades,

On returning from a thirty hour visit outside the city I received a disturbing report from Boyd.

Last night (Sunday 4 October) he had a telephone conversation with Fred in which Fred said that he would "deck" any comrade who used the word "misappropriate" (in relation to the incident in which he and Gerald had sent 1917 West to the printers without authorisation from the branch and prior to circulation of a proposal as required by the IS). He particularly noted Barbara as the comrade who had used this word. Fred's parting words to Boyd were to the effect: "If you use that word I'll blow your head off." He repeated that statement.

As a result of this conversation Boyd believed that there was a real possibility of Fred carrying out violent acts against comrades (including himself). He was very bothered by the conversation with Fred.

On hearing about this matter today I had a conversation with Gerald in which this threat was discussed. Gerald tended to excuse Fred, but said that there was a real possibility of such threats being carried out.

Talking to Boyd about the matter I strongly urged upon him the necessity to report his conversation with Fred to the IS as an urgent priority.

I understand that Boyd left a message on Fred's telephone answering machine to the effect that if he did not make a withdrawal in writing of the threat Boyd would report the conversation to the IS.

Fred responded to this message by calling Boyd this evening (Monday 5 October).

Boyd recounted this Monday evening conversation to me more or less immediately by telephone at the office. Fred said his remarks had been "intemperate". Fred also said he was so upset by the use of the word "misappropriate" that he did not think he should attend branch meetings for fear of what he might do in a fit of rage.

It is not entirely clear to me, on questioning Boyd, whether the threat was truly withdrawn in this second conversation.

However, in reporting this conversation to me Boyd said he was not inclined to report the conversations in view of fact that the second one, by implication, seemed to withdraw the threat in the first conversation. The second conversation also seemed to indicate that Fred was more in control of himself than he had been. I urged him to report both conversations.

I returned from the office to Boyd's place (where I am staying). Boyd's inclination was still not to make the report, in view of an implied commitment he felt he had made to Fred to not report the threat if it were withdrawn, together with the feeling he had that Fred had in fact, more or less, withdrawn it.

I said that I would write a report, and would request Boyd to read it and to testify to its accuracy or inaccuracy, specifying any errors.

CGs Bill

The above is a true and accurate report of the conversations, limited to the matter of physical violence, I had with Fred on October 4 and 5. I will write more on this issue later.

Boyd

Definition:

American Heritage Dictionary, 1973

MISAPPROPRIATE:

1. (A) TO APPROPRIATE WRONGLY. (B) TO APPROPRIATE DISHONESTLY FOR ONE'S ONE USE; EMBEZZLE. 2. TO USE FOR ILLEGAL PURPOSES.

Riker
10/6/92

Some Illumination, Perhaps—10/6/92

FROM: Riker

TO: All Comrades

SUBJECT: Some Illumination, Perhaps

COPIES: All Points

Dear Comrades:

Comrade Adaire is a serious comrade and as such when she writes a letter filled with concern as was her letter of 10/4/92, she deserves a serious answer. We will do our best.

After quoting me from the tape of the September 1, 1992 BABT local meeting to the effect that Dorn had betrayed our trust by sending secret, poisonous reports to the other locals without giving us an opportunity to defend ourselves, Adaire says:

"This is because Barbara wrote to comrades she politically agreed with privately about her thoughts on the BABT situation. But comrade Riker seems oblivious to the betrayal of trust he and Smith committed when they published *1917 West* without fulfilling the requirements of the IS and, more recently, by voting against a motion that upholds democratic centralism."

Comrades, we betrayed no one. The claim by Riley/Logan that we did not submit a proposal to the IS is pure fiction and we have said so from the beginning. We have said repeatedly that there was no violation of democratic centralism and that we were within our rights (as defined at the Berlin conference) to publish *1917W*. We intend to document this as best we can in the next installment of ONE SPARTACIST LEAGUE IS ENOUGH series of documents.

The problem is that while there were numerous "proposals" to the IS on the form and content of *1917W*, all of them were done over the telephone between Smith (assigned as *1917W* editor and a member of the IEC), and Riley. We here know that these proposals were made because Smith reported them verbally to local meetings at the time, and Riley also knows they were made. Documenting phone calls when you are dealing with dishonest people is a difficult problem, but we shall do our best.

Adaire goes on (in her letter), to take Smith to task for calling Dorn a "snitch". While Smith may be guilty of a bit of hyperbole, (only a bit) Comrade Adaire gets a bit carried away when she says:

"In a communist organisation there are no "snitches". The concept of snitching and democratic centralism are incompatible. Breaches of democratic centralism have to be reported. Comrade Dorn's private political correspondence was a direct result of your, and comrade Riker's, flagrant breach of democratic centralism and refusal to respect the discipline of the organisation. Comrade Dorn, as any politically responsible comrade in the given situation, acted as the agent of the IBT."

I'm sorry to have to bring this bad news to Comrade Adaire but there are "snitches" in communist organizations and have been since the rise of Stalinism (and probably before that). That, in fact, is how a dishonest leadership with no political authority maintains its control. However, leaving that point aside for the moment, it is refreshing to finally have someone admit that "Comrade Dorn . . . acted as the agent of the IBT." More accurately I think it must be said, she acted as the factional "agent" of Logan and Riley."

I don't know Adaire well enough personally to know why she became a revolutionary but I do remember what motivated me, and it was not the internal life of the American CP which in those days was a hotbed of underground intrigue, spies, and repression. I was inspired by the prospect that it was possible to build a party and fight for a society in which the duplicity, the phoniness, the spies, snitches, lies, two-facedness, dishonesty and the self-centered self-aggrandizement of bourg society would all be swept away. And I realized early on that while a party was necessary to create this new society, that it was nevertheless also true that you get the party you build. If you start spying on the membership sending people into other locals with note pad and poison pen in hand—well, guess what: sooner, rather than later, you end up with the Spartacist League. No thanks, I've been there.

Paper's Forever

Later Comrade Adaire (purposefully) misses the point of Comrade Smith's remarks from the 9/1/92 BABT meeting: "So once you put that shit on paper its a different ball game and its on paper now babe [Dorn], its on paper and paper's forever". She does not say that what Smith was talking about was the difference between casual verbal conversation between comrades and the damage to the political authority of the Bay Area comrades that has been done by Dorn in sending out her impressions (in secret reports) of our functioning here without allowing us an opportunity to defend ourselves.

Dorn accused Smith of (unconscious) "capitulation", accused Boyd of being (politically) "sloppy", accused Riker of "misleadership", accused the COPWATCH fraction (including her own companion) of "capitulation to popular fronts" (see Dorn secret report dated August 5, 1992). Comrades, these are serious charges, particularly from a very junior comrade with no grasp of the history of this local and only a very superficial knowledge of the abilities and past work of the comrades involved. The BABT deserved better. They deserved the opportunity to answer to these charges not—as was the case, in the corridors—but out in the open!

Further on Comrade Adaire takes Smith and I to task for calling Riley a liar. She says:

"I abhor the calling of comrades 'liars' lightly so when I hear a comrade saying someone is a liar I take it very seriously indeed. We cannot run an international tendency with comrades claiming other comrades are liars and just go on with the next business at hand. Such accusations that are not dealt with in the proper fashion breed distrust and eventually destroy an organisation."

Well comrade, we don't take calling our comrades "liars" lightly either (or misleader or capitulators to the popular front, for that matter). We feel that we documented two recent lies by Riley in my letter of 10/2/92. Perhaps Comrade Adaire doesn't agree. Well, maybe we can change her mind with more examples.

In Riley's reply to my letter of October 2, he first tries to confuse comrades (or perhaps he is confused himself) by "correcting" my "impressions" about who paid for the printing of 1917 prior to the fusion by bringing up the fact that the Cleveland Local contributed money to the printing costs of the ET Bulletins. Comrades, there hasn't been a Cleveland Local since 1987 and we haven't printed the ET Bulletin since early in 1986. What I said was that:

"Money in the old BT, pre-fusions BT, was (except for its short supply) never really a bone of contention. Usually BABT paid for the printing of the magazine while Toronto and NY paid for other expenses for the tendency as a whole. On other occasions, NY paid for the printing of the magazine and BABT paid for other things, etc. etc.

The magazine comrades, as in 1917.

If being confused and irrelevant were Riley's only offenses, he could be forgiven—but he goes on:

"The question of "draining" money from BABT has two aspects.

"1) Given our desire to try to have a political discussion, rather than simply resorting to organizational measures against your deliberate and conscious disloyalty to the organization, we felt that it was at least appropriate that a local that thought it had enough money to do a flashy printing job on a local paper with a circulation of 300 or so, could and should be tapped for money for the publication of the world's best Trotskyist journal. This became all the more obvious when we discovered that you had misappropriated funds without authorization for your pet project.

"2) As it happens (with Cdes. Riker and Smith both paying pledges on relatively highly skilled jobs, and some substantial contributions from former BT and SL members in the area) the BABT has indeed in the recent past been the local with the highest monthly income and the one therefore which could "best afford" to pay. That remains the case today.

"If we compare the latest available figures on monthly SP's and donations between BABT, TBT, NYBT and Germany we find that the average income per month from April to June for BABT is \$1333; for TBT (August) it is C\$462 (converts to about \$370 at current exchange rates) for NYBT (average of July and August) \$300 and for Germany (average of January and February) DM914 (converts at current rates to something like \$600).

"So much for the Cde. Riker's case that Cde. Riley is guilty of "lying" on the question of who could "best afford" to pay for the printing. . . ."

Comrades will note here that Riley never actually denies lying about who was "best able to pay" the printing costs of 1917 No. 11. Oh, he makes excuses and blusters about how Riker and Smith are "paying pledges on relatively highly skilled jobs" (read: they really privileged workers i.e. part of the labor aristocracy and we all know how backward they are). Well, this is a lie too. Given the deteriorated state of the unions in the U.S., Smith is unemployed for most of the year. Riker has been unemployed since the fall of 1988 when the newspaper he worked for

went bankrupt. He now works two part-time jobs out of union hiring halls (one of which is as a day laborer) and is, as a matter of fact, the lowest paid worker in BABT.

Then trying to further the seed he has planted in his readers minds that we are some sort of clot of backward labor aristocrats Riley prattles on about BABT having "highest monthly income". The "income" Riley refers to includes both sustaining pledges and donations. Donations that we hustle here in BABT from supporters and former members. Since he is an unreconstructed Spartacist and denounces any one who resigns from TBT as "unclean" and "sinners" who are to be shunned—he doesn't get any of this money in Toronto. That's not our fault and his inadequacies should not be held against us.

Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics

If "there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics" Riley seems to deal in all three. the most egregious lie Riley tells in the October 2nd letter is that Smith and Riker "misappropriated funds without authorization for (our) pet project." This charge, later parroted by Dorn at the 10/3/92 BABT local meeting, is well within the parameters of a "damned lie."

First, there was no "misappropriation of funds" (tantamount to accusing us of theft). All money, every last cent, that was spent on the production of 1917W was specially raised from the periphery of BABT for the express purpose (i.e. we told them where their money would be spent) of printing 1917W. Riley knows this and he knew from the beginning exactly how much 1917W would cost (that's why its a lie and not just incorrect). We had differences of opinion with Riley, tactical differences that were resolved in our favor (as is our right as established at the Berlin conference). But at no time did we deceive him (or anyone else) as to what we were about. Any "misappropriation" of funds exists only in Riley's (and Dorn's) fevered imagination.

Riley then offers his second lie in the same paragraph when he asserts that 1917W was mine and Smith's "pet project". 1917W was never my "project", pet or otherwise. It was the initiative of Boyd and Smith from the beginning. I got into the project later because I thought it would be a good way to train BABT comrades in the skills of editing, copyfitting, typesetting and producing printed propaganda (something they would never learn from the slash-and-burn editing techniques of Riley).

If Comrade Boyd subsequently got "cold feet" (his term) and no longer supports the project—that doesn't change the fact that 1917W was never anyone's "pet project". It was and is the publication of BABT—read the masthead. Riley knew this as well and, once again, that is why it is a lie and not just incorrect. In fact, Adaire herself says: "For the record it is important to point out that 1917 West was edited by the Editorial Board of the IBT adding to the delay in putting out 1917 number 11. Of course, the comrades involved in the Bay Area chose to ignore some of the editing eg the IceCube article, putting the feelings of a contact above the interests of the party."

Yes comrades, "for the record", not only was 1917W the project of the BABT local but it "was edited by the Editorial Board of the IBT". As for the editing of the Icecube review, it should be elementary but perhaps a word of explanation is called for here. First, the Icecube review was a signed article. It says in 1917W's editorial box (bottom of page 2): "Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Bolshevik Tendency". That should be sufficient to end the discussion. However, in this particular case there is another factor. This young working class black man is a potential recruit to this organization. We here are not interested in psychologically dominating him or trying to impress him with our infallibility—we leave that to the cultists.

No, we want mentally healthy, independent and strong-willed young workers. In order to have gotten the article with all the offending words removed we would have had to either brow-beaten the author into submission or run the article without a by-line. Neither choice fits our purposes. Case closed.

Spartacists and Why Some Folks Ain't Got a Sense of Humor

Comrade Adaire, who otherwise seems to be a pretty decent human being, apparently has no sense of humor (and is pretty thin-skinned to boot).

In listening to the tapes of the September 1 BABT meeting, Comrade Adaire thought she heard me say: "... that New Zealand was the centre of sheep struggle and that the Bay Area was the centre of class struggle".

As a matter of fact what I was talking about was the relative merits of holding the upcoming conference in New Zealand as opposed to Berlin (or the Bay Area), and I referred to Berlin as the center of class struggle (remember the Berlin Wall and the DDR?), and then I made a joke about New Zealand being the "center of Sheep Struggle". I'm sorry comrade if you find my humor a bit crude, but I suspect you find us a bit crude in any respect. That's unfortunate because in the U.S. Smith and I are what passes for here as worker intellectuals. If you think we're crude, wait until you get a load of the average black or white American worker.

Cults are not the result of "woolly thinkers" or, for that matter members who are "sheep" (or goat-fuckers, either). Cults are the result of 1) political isolation, 2) manipulative leaders, and 3) well-intentioned but inexperienced members. Unfortunately, all three are present in Wellington

CG's
Riker

Provocations/Responses—10/7/92

FROM: Riker
TO: IEC
SUBJECT: Provocations/responses
COPIES: All Points
Dear Comrades:

As per Riley's letter of October 6th I hereby unambiguously and clearly retract, in writing, all threats of physical violence against all IBT comrades for whatever reason.

CG's
Riker

Provocation/Responses II—10/7/92

FROM: Smith
TO: All Members of the IBT
SUBJECT: Provocation/responses
COPIES: All Points
Dear comrades,

As per the Minutes of the October 5 meeting of the "International Secretariat" of the "International Bolshevik Tendency" (World Party of Socialist Revolution, Radiant Shepherds leading our flock down the Shining Path to end all conflict):

I hereby in writing, clearly, unambiguously, loyally and slavishly declare on a stack of 1917's ("the worlds best Trotskyist journal") that I, comrade Smith, will henceforth carry out the decisions and instructions of the IS which is the executive arm of the IEC the authoritative elected leadership of the IBT.

Your most obedient and
undeserving servant,
Smith

Letter From Logan/Boyd/Trent—10/9/92

From: Bill, Boyd, Trent
To: Gerald & Fred
Copies: Nil
Subject: Tomorrow's branch meeting
Dear comrades,

This is just to inform you of our intention to move the following motions at tomorrow's meeting:

I

The habitual bullying tactics, abuse and disorderly behaviour of Fred and Gerald are severely damaging to the political health of the BAPT.

In particular this pattern will damage all but the most extraordinary new comrades, either alienating them or training them in the unacceptable pattern.

Members of the BAPT have at times made unsuccessful attempts to break this pattern. However, because Fred and Gerald constitute half the branch, because they are its most experienced members (one of them being a member of the IEC), and because they have extremely forceful personalities, it is difficult to control this behaviour within the confines of the branch.

The BAPT will henceforth take the strongest measures within the framework of democratic centralism to eliminate such tactics, and requests the support of the organisation internationally and its leading bodies to this end.

The abusive language and disorderly conduct of Fred and Gerald at meetings must stop. Any meeting at which they display this behaviour should require them to leave the meeting.

In future every comrade in the branch is directed report to the organisation internationally any behaviour (in meetings or otherwise) which tends towards abuse, disorder or bullying, irrespective of any subsequent withdrawals or apologies.

II

Fred and Gerald committed a serious breach of discipline in having the first number of 1917 West printed behind the back of the BAPT and before fulfilling the IS's requirement to circulate a written proposal for in-

ternational discussion. This constituted an unauthorised expenditure of money.

The IBT must be scrupulously honest in putting money collected from supporters to the purposes for which it is collected, but the expenditure of such funds, as all other IBT funds, is properly subject to the control of the organisation.

Fred and Gerald's unauthorised expenditure of money, has been described in the organisation as "misappropriation". This is not inappropriate. This does not, however, suggest that the comrades obtained any personal material benefit from their act.

III

The BABT is an exceptionally weak branch, and is in particular need of guidance and leadership from the international organisation. This is acutely so in the context of the current messy disputes. The branch commits itself to supplying the international organisation with all day-to-day information which would be helpful in giving such leadership and guidance, and requests the international organisation to give close attention to its problems of politics and organisation.

In particular it is necessary to encourage the following practices at this time:

- i the distribution of branch minutes immediately after approval
- ii frequent notes to all points about problems and prospects of the branch and differences of opinion within it (from all members of the BABT and especially the organiser)
- iii telephone consultation between the organiser and the IS approximately once a week to discuss external work and internal problems

CGs
Bill, Boyd, Trent

Partial Transcript-10/10/92 BABT Meeting

RIKER—(Responding to charges by Logan that Smith and Riker have been "abusive", "disorderly" and "rude" during the discussion of the production of *1917W*):

"A lot of this (criticism) has to do culture and style. Within our culture in N.Y., if you're not like we are, you'd be eaten by this time! You'd be eaten. When you grow up in the streets, it's doubly true. So, it's partly, I say partly a matter of culture and style.

"But what put the heat into this discussion? That is what we should be trying to get at here. Instead of saying 'Gee, it's terrible, there's all this heat in the discussion which is what Bill's (Logan) presentation added up to. I agree, I would much rather have had a quiet polemic about whether or not we should have allowed this Dweeb in Toronto to reconstruct an entire organization ad hoc. Who the hell is Tom Riley?"

"But we can't have that discussion. And the reason we can't have that discussion, the reason why there is so much heat, the reason why we have to write reams of documents is that you people lied to start with and then you built a whole case on a false premise. And then, you get outraged when we get angry. You get outraged that we get angry that you lied about what went on.

"Now, I don't know that Bill consciously lied and I don't meant to say that he did. But, you repeat a lie which is almost the same thing—not quite. That doesn't make you quite as bad as the liar. You'd be totally innocent and totally without blame if we hadn't told you that it was a lie. But we told you over and over that it's a lie. And you continue to repeat it. Now we have to say that either A) you are so fucking cynical that you don't care what the truth is; or B) you are so naive that you don't understand that we're telling you what the truth is; or C) you've got another agenda. I'd like it if you'd clear that up. So, that's that basis of it, that's where all the heat is coming from.

"Now, if you guys were principled at all, you would say: 'These guys are assholes, and they're totally difficult to deal with—but, you know what: there is no such thing as a North American Section (of the BT) and never was, it's a figment of the Wiz's imagination and it never existed. But you know, by god it ought to, and we should bring it up at the next conference.' "

Logan interrupts:

"We have said that."

Riker:

"No you haven't. I'd give you credit if you had. And the second thing that you would say is: 'Perhaps "misappropriation" given it's North American usage, is reaching a bit and perhaps what happened was we had a difference of opinion about how the damn thing was supposed to

be printed.'

"And according to the transcripts of the Berlin (fusion) conference, our most recent international conference for you 'internationalists', we have the right to decide the form in which the propaganda is printed as long as it is our line.

"Now, I know someone will jump up here and say: 'What about the Ice Cube article?' That is a separate case, it was a signed article and I'd be glad to debate it—but, generally speaking, the overwhelming majority of the copy in this magazine was sent to the IEC. It was edited by the IEC, and it was sent back and (then) printed exactly the way the IEC sent it back.

"Except for the 'Ice Cube' article which was a special case, this thing had our line. And we have the right to fucking well offset (print) it if we want as long as we didn't spend the organization's money. Right?

"Where did we get the money from? The Wiz said: 'Go out and raise the money outside the organization.' We go outside the organization, we raise the money—we spent it. What's the problem?

"Now you see, that's why we can't have a discussion. It's because we don't agree on the facts. That's the problem. You keep repeating these fucking lies and we spend all our god damn time writing: 'Fucking Riley's a fucking liar.' And you keep saying: 'Oh no he's not.'

"So we can't have a discussion until we can agree on the facts. That's the basic problem and that's where the heat comes from.

"I suggest that you comrades drop back about thirty yards and reconsider your position and come back with a reasonable position on what happened and when we can agree on that then let's talk about what kind of an organization we're trying to build instead of you trying to build it de facto over our dead bodies. Because that's the only way you're going to build it is over our fucking political dead bodies. We are not going to have another Spartacist League!

"The sooner you get that straight, the less trouble we'll have in having a discussion. No, we never decided to have a North American Section. The money belongs to the international as a whole—but this local is not in receivership. And they (the I.S.) have no god damn business taking the money, based on a lie that we 'misappropriated' money, and moving it to New York.

"Now, if you tell us: 'Look comrades, this is unreasonable the money is spread around the world, we can't really have control of it and what we want to do is create a central fund where the money comes from Berlin and . . . Bum Fuck New Zealand and all the rest and we're going to put it in New York—I have no problem with that. But don't make any punitive raids on the Bay Area and expect us to sit here and take it."

Logan:

"Point of order."

Riker:

Yes?

Logan:

"I find the term 'Bum Fuck' objectionable"

Riker:

"That is an American colloquialism, a euphemism for a rural place of little consequence. A backwater as in 'Bum Fuck Wyoming.'"

...

Smith:

"... At this point, (when 1917W was ready for production), the comrades from the PRG and other disingenuous people think that we were supposed to then have a debate after I had already raised the money, we had written all the articles and now we're supposed to debate where or not we're going to have a paper—sorry chaps, I can't get into that. It don't work like that.

"If indeed we were not going to print the paper the time to say that we're not going to print the paper was in the beginning of that discussion. That's when Riley had every right to say: 'Well no, it's probably not the best idea' or 'we probably shouldn't do it,' or whatever. Then we would argue: 'Well, why not?' and then you know. But at least you front load that—whether or not to be or not to be. You don't go through people writing the whole paper, collecting the funds, laying it out, putting the thing together.

"A large amount of the paper was written by people who are not members of the group. I worked with everyone who wrote an article and I can tell you—we can go through the whole

list of how the thing was done. But you don't really care about that because you're stuck on this myth that we just 'stole' money from the organization and bullshit like this. This just not true. I can't, I don't know how to communicate with anyone who would come up with bullshit like that.

"And why is it a lie and bullshit and deserve to be called shit? Because the word misappropriation does have a double meaning. If you think that indeed one of the meanings is that we didn't give a (written) proposal and therefore — that's a bunch of bullshit. First of all we argued (against) that in our document, we explained that every national grouping has a right to put out its press. That was already agreed to. We were operating under the assumption that, well, that includes us.

"Since the PRG in Wellington, one city, is a national group and they're putting out their (propaganda), fine put it out. We never, ever wrote a word—people write stuff—I don't know what you write—write, write, write, put your paper out. The 'Bolsheviks' or whatever they call it in Germany—they write their paper and nobody is going to try to fuck with their shit. Come on out with your paper—do something. Live, be alive—try to recruit. Do whatever you think is necessary to get your group off the ground. And in that process comrades, people do learn certain things about putting out the paper, its relationship to their general tasks etc.

"But by having outside forces that don't know anything about the lay of the land—come in and start making decisions for the membership in the local, prevents that learning process from taking place. It's not good. That's what we oppose, above all else.

"So we vote for these motions last week (BABT meeting 10/3/92), in good faith. I thought . . . they provided the international democratic framework in which we co-exist and work out further our differences in the future. . . ."

Logan:

"... I think (that the argument that) abusiveness is OK because it is part of a cultural heritage is a spurious point, clearly. The fact is that we all come from deformed cultures, we are formed by oppression, in bourgeois society. But, we have got to change our culture to become communists, to some extent. And in-so-far as some comrades have got habits which are not constructive, they've got modify those behaviors.

"And the question about Tom's lying has never been demonstrated comrades, he did not lie. You've had plenty of opportunity to prove that he's lied and you've failed to do it. The fact is that there was a direction by the IS not to publish until there was a proposal circulated for discussion. You chose to ignore that. This is a serious breach of discipline. And that has got to be the basis for moving forward. We cannot—we're not an organization if comrades refuse to accept the decisions of the central body of that organization. And these motions, (the motions of IS Minutes No. 31) among other things seek to address that question."

...

Riker:

"There are two things going on here. First of all, it is dishonest of you to say that I defended the tone of this discussion on the basis of cultural differences. I said that's part of it. The main part of it is that you keep repeating a . . . fucking lie! Now, that's what I said and that's what's on the record.

"Now, on the question of using the term 'misappropriation'. You keep prattling, you yammer like a demented chicken (mimics Logan) misappropriation means this, misappropriation means that, I want you to listen to this—I'm going to read to you Tom's original statement, and this is the context that it's in. He says: 'Given our desire to try to have a political discussion rather than simply resorting to organizational measures against your deliberate and conscious disloyalty to the organization, we felt that it was at least appropriate that a local that thought it had enough money to a flashy printing job on a local paper with a circulation of 300 or so, could and should be tapped for money for the publication of the world's greatest Trotskyist Journal.' (laughter). Now, listen to this: 'This became all the more obvious when we discovered that you had misappropriated funds, without authorization, for your pet project.'"

"Well, my god my man, if that ain't calling me a thief I'll never hear one. The reason he used the word misappropriation is so he could suck in dummies like him (indicates Boyd). 'Well,' (mimics Boyd) 'it says here in the dictionary . . .'"

"It's clear that, very subtly, he's trying to plant the idea in people's minds that something illegal took place here. That these guys were doing it for their 'pet project'. Our personal little

'pet project'.

"Don't you understand? That's the context its in. It's a fucking lie! That's the heat in this discussion. He keeps lying and you (Logan) keep defending him. We can argue about whether or not we should have made the decision based on the Berlin conference whether or not to get it (1917W) offset—we can argue about that.

"But you cannot argue he had the right to stop us on the one hand, and argue as Bill did in Berlin on the other hand, that we have the right to print it. There's a contradiction there and it is not our contradiction.

"You comrades have that contradiction. You either have to disown what you said in Berlin that put the Berlin agreements in context, . . . or you have to say 'Tom, you're off your ass and you didn't have the right to do it (stop the production) and therefore, and this is what we contend, that there was no violation of democratic centralism. We had the fucking right to do it.

"Now, did (Smith) have the right to do it (send the paper to the printer)? (Smith) was the editor of this issue.

"Now these two comrades (Trent/Boyd) could make an argument that had we asked them they would have said no (to immediate publication before the arrival of Logan). They could legitimately make that argument.

"But Tom has no grounds for argument at all. It's a fucking bold-faced lie and a frame-up. And it (has) sucked all you people into it.

"We either have it (the right to publish local propaganda) or we don't. Now, I want Comrade Logan to either disown his own remarks (in Berlin) or not. Which is it.

...
"On the tone of this discussion: Bill said—at another (earlier) meeting: 'these people will argue over which button to push on the tape recorder.'

"Yeah! You're damn right we will! If you're going to push the wrong button and it's not going to record, it is pointless to push any button at all. So you're damn right we'll argue with you. We think you're wrong! If we thought you were an idiot, or if we thought you were as crooked as your bloc partner in Toronto, we wouldn't be arguing with you. But we think we can convince you. We think we can win you over or we wouldn't bother arguing with you.

...
"I want to talk about these motions. What these motions are, objectively—taken with this financial bullshit that the IS just voted on, is putting the Bay Area (BT) in receivership. That is, in essence, what's happened here. And, it ain't happening. I'm going to vote against it. It ain't going to happen.

"Now, I want to tell you something. (Someone) earlier said that it was our job to tell the PRG about (plans for) the paper.

"No, no, no. It is your contention that the Wiz is the IS. OK, let's take that as our premise. If the Wiz is the IS, he's the one we should be talking to about whether we are going to produce a paper. Not somebody down in (New Zealand). Not Spike in the PRG. But the Wiz. So, we called the Wiz. And, we dealt with the Wiz.

"If the Wiz had a disagreement with this proposal it was his responsibility to go to the IEC and say: 'I disagree with this proposal.' He didn't (do it) for two reasons, I submit. This is conjecture, I agree, I can't get inside his head. But, I make the following proposition: There were two reasons he didn't go to the IEC—A) He has contempt for us. He thinks we're a bunch of asshole bumpkins out here in California who (he thought) couldn't get a magazine together if we had three monkeys and a fire company to help us. He was amazed when we got the fucking thing together. That's A). And B), he didn't send anything around to the PRG because he didn't disagree.

"It wasn't until the end that he disagreed. And what did he disagree over? The chicken-shit, fifth rate question of whether or not to have it Xeroxed or printed. And, we had the right, according to the Berlin agreement, to print it the fucking way we wanted.

"Why did we rush it in (to the printer)? Because we knew that this would happen (holds up stack of documents), we knew that this would happen, we're not stupid. If we hadn't printed the fucking paper (when we did), we'd still be waiting to print it. We'd still be arguing about it. We knew that this would happen.

"Read the document that I wrote to Riley right after this started ["Just a Few Corrections"—3/30/92]. I said 'Listen, I'm not getting into a long dispute, that's why we printed it, we knew

you'd drag us into a fucking dispute that lasted months, and I'm not going to do it.

"How did we get into this (mess)? Logan came here to pick a fight over it. That's his job and that's cool. But, that is how we got into this. Logan came here and picked a fight over it. And then sent a fucking spy in (Barbara) and then denied she was a spy.

". . . Listen, if there's any doubt in your mind—now Logan denies this, and if I were him, I'd probably deny it too—but if there's any doubt in your mind what Logan's purpose was (in coming here), in our next document we will produce some secret correspondence in which Logan's real position on 1917W becomes quite clear, quite clear. And he was opposed to printing 1917W—he denies that. But we have his opinion in writing. And he denies that he was opposed to it.

"Now we do know that David (PRG) was opposed to it because he wrote a letter that said so openly. And Jim was opposed to it and Tom was opposed to it, and Nason was opposed to it—what would have been the point to appeal it (the IS decision) to the IEC? We had the right to do it. What is the point of appealing to the IEC to do something that it is your right to do? They did not have the right to stop this publication! No more than they had the right to stop Bolsheviks in Germany or the Downtown Bolshevik over there in Bum Fuck Wellington.

"We don't think they have the right to seize our treasury. Yes, it's true that all the money belongs to the entire tendency. But we don't see them seize(ing) anyone else's treasury. This is punitive against the Bay Area on the assertion that we were stealing the organization's money—'we've got to put it someplace safe.' That's a fat fucking lie. That's why this discussion is so hot: they keep lying and we keep calling them on it and you (Boyd) keep saying: 'If you guy's would be nicer—maybe they'd stop lying,'" (laughter).

Transcribed by Riker, 12/12/92

Letter from Logan—10/11/92

From: Bill (Bay Area)

To: IS

Subject: IS directive regarding BABT finance

Dear comrades,

I support the letters of today's date from Kalische, Monsees and Harlan, Adaire and David, and Cullen.

The BABT motion directing its treasurer to ignore IS directives pending discussion is clearly in violation of the elementary norms of democratic centralism. The IS decision is in force, and no decision by any subordinate body has the authority to countermand it. The treasurer has no choice within the framework of democratic centralism but to carry out the instructions of the IS. Should the treasurer fail to carry out the instructions, in accord with the timetable laid down by the IS, I believe it would be necessary to expel him.

I note that a majority of members of the IEC would support such a measure.

Irrespective of the BABT treasurer's eventual compliance or otherwise, the BABT's passage of this motion of indiscipline is an extremely serious matter. I call on the IS to give consideration to putting the branch immediately into receivership.

CGs
Bill

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/12/93 (#32)

(Excerpt)

FOR IEC

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) BABT Situation

Re 1):

MOTION:

The 10 October branch meeting of BABT marked a hardening and a sharpening of the anti-Leninist attitudes and practices which have led to the increasingly sharp polemics between the two leading comrades of the BABT (Smith and Riker) and the other leading members of the IBT. The behavior of these two comrades with regard to the unauthorized publication of 1917 West No. 1 lies outside the extremely flexible and elastic bounds of

what the IBT can tolerate. This issue has boiled down to whether comrades should be bound by the norms of Leninist centralism, (i.e., the instructions of the IS/IEC) or if the IBT at this stage in its development is too small or too poorly led to attempt to impose international control on local activity. All other questions are secondary.

The following motion by comrade Logan failed in the BABT by a vote of 3 to 1 of the local membership:

"That the treasurer comply with all directives of the IS."

A second, counterposed motion, moved by Comrade Smith, carried:

"That the BABT treasurer be instructed not to forward any monies to the "IS" pending a discussion in the IBT on the nature of this "change" in our financial functioning and the forwarding of up to date financial reports from every IBT local. The BABT has already forwarded its most recent report."

This declaration by a local of its intent to flout the decision of the highest standing body of the IBT, is a declaration of intent to violate the elementary norms of democratic centralism. The IS decision is in force, and no decision by any subordinate body has the authority to countermand it. The treasurer has no choice within the framework of democratic centralism but to carry out the instructions of the IS.

We are informed this evening by comrade Logan that he had talked to Comrade Smith who says he considers a split inevitable if the IS proceeds with implementation of its motion of 5 October regarding the BABT treasury. The 5 October IS motion (as amended in our note of 7 October) directing the BABT treasurer to send funds to the IS in New York stands. We note that Comrade Riker has complied with the first part of it, and sent us an up-to-date financial statement prior to 12 October.

We hereby instruct Comrade Riker to deliver to Comrade Logan on or before 16 October a certified check in the amount of US\$3700 made out to the IS member in New York, which Comrade Logan is to forward to the IS. With these funds we will initiate a separate IS account in New York, into which we will transfer the bulk of the accumulated funds of the NYBT at an early date. The IS plans to set up a parallel IS fund in Toronto, where there are also IS members, that will hold the surplus accumulated by TBT, to avoid the unnecessary expense involved in currency conversion. At this time we do not believe that there is any substantial accumulation of funds in either Germany or New Zealand. However, in future, the IS may require that funds be sent from these sections as well.

We understand that Comrade Riker has indicated reluctance to abide by these instructions. We wish to make clear in advance to Comrade Riker and all IBT members the consequences of a failure to comply with the IS motion within the time frame stipulated. If by 6pm PST on Friday 16 October Comrade Riker has not delivered the funds to Comrade Logan, or made an arrangement to do so which is satisfactory to Comrade Logan, he will be automatically suspended from the IBT and all subordinate bodies (the BT, the BABT, as BABT treasurer, as a member of any BABT fractions, etc.) If by 6pm PST on Tuesday 20 October Comrade Riker has still not complied with the IS instruction he will be automatically expelled from the IBT and all its sub-bodies.

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Submitted 12 October; approved 12 October 1992

APPENDICES:

The following items are appended to these minutes because of their relevance to the implementation of the motions passed by the IS on 5 October 1992:

...

* Appendix No. 5

AMMENDMENT TO MOTION NO. 1, IN IS MINUTES NO. 31

Dear BABT Comrades:

Having received your statement dated today repudiating threats of violence we wish to address the adjusted timetable for the implementation of the IS motion regarding the BABT treasury. The dates specified for forwarding report as well as the date for notification of the amount of money to be transferred will all be set back one day. Therefore that part of the motion which was contained in IS Minutes No. 31 is to be amended as follows [the new dates are included in square brackets]:

"Accordingly, the IS, acting as the executive arm of the IEC, directs the BABT treasurer to forward a full and complete current financial report to the IS by [12] October so that the IS may determine the size of a forthcoming financial transfer from the treasury of the BABT to an IS/IEC account to be held in New York.

"The BABT treasurer should expect to receive a notification of exactly how much money is to be transferred on or before [14] October and be prepared to transfer the funds on or before [16] October."

CGs,
T. Riley
for the IS

Minutes of the Meeting of the International Secretariat, 10/16/93 (#33)

FOR IEC

(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) BABT Situation 2) Maastricht Treaty

Re 1):

MOTION No. 1:

Comrade Riker has today handed over a check in the proper amount to Comrade Logan. Therefore we are not proceeding with the measures outlined in IS minutes #32. We note however that comrades Riker and Smith have exhibited a pattern of behavior over the past 10 months which is incompatible with membership in a Leninist organization. The previous policy of the IS/IEC of extreme leniency as our rules, procedures and duly elected leading bodies have been ignored or flouted has come to an end. The next violation of discipline by either comrade will be dealt with extremely firmly.

The two comrades retain their rights as members including the right to make any criticisms or observations they see fit within the proper channels. If they can make the adjustment to behaving like members of a Leninist organization, i.e., rigidly adhering to the instructions of the leading bodies of the IBT, they may perhaps again make positive contributions to building a revolutionary organization. But we, representing the overwhelming majority within the IBT, do not intend to tolerate any future freelancing, violations of instructions, threats or abuse.

MOTION No. 2:

We propose to the IEC that Comrade Smith be immediately indefinitely suspended from the IEC. Over the course of the past year he has demonstrated in a myriad of ways that he does not belong on the leading body of the IBT. The specific incident that underlines why Smith must be suspended is his behavior at the 10 October BABT local meeting where he opposed a motion calling for abiding by democratic centralism (i.e., the decisions of the IS). This took place only three days after Smith, in response to a 5 October ultimatum from the IS, had put in writing his agreement to "carry out the decisions and instructions of the IS." [see appendices]. As we noted in IS minutes No. 32 Smith's motion, which was passed by a majority of the local, was a declaration of its intent to flout the decision of the highest standing body of the IBT, and thereby to violate the elementary norms of democratic centralism.

IEC members should promptly indicate in writing whether they support this motion, in which case it will take immediate effect, or oppose it, in which case Smith will remain as a full IEC member.

MOTION No. 3:

Given the manifest political demoralization and incapacity (or unwillingness) of the two most experienced comrades in the branch to provide positive leadership to the BABT, and the fact that there is no clear majority for Leninism in the branch as presently constituted, we hereby demote the BABT to an Organizing Committee (OC). This is an appropriate reflection of the current capacity of the BABT.

As an OC the BABT does not have the right to issue leaflets or any other written material which is not explicitly authorized in advance by the IS. Similarly the OC does not have the right to participate in any political initiative without the supervision and approval of the IS. This would include intervention at conferences, public meetings etc. Normally this would involve collaboration between a member of the IS and the OC organizer, or other designated comrade. In general it is necessary for such a comrade to consult in advance, perhaps on a weekly basis, with the IS about significant political interventions and other activities. The OC may recommend prospective new members to the IS, but it is not capable of accepting new members. The OC has the right and duty to disseminate IBT publications and positions to the best of its capacity in its locality.

Because of the historic difficulties experienced in the BABT in having Comrades Riker and Smith deport themselves in a Leninist fashion during internal meetings, and the necessity in the current situation to monitor their behavior as closely as possible, all OC meetings are to be taped and copies mailed to Comrade Logan to monitor on behalf of the IS/IEC.

MOTION No. 4:

Comrade Riker, who has proven himself unsuitable to be a holder of IBT funds, is to be immediately relieved as treasurer of the BABT OC and replaced by either comrade Trent or Boyd. Appropriate reallocation of assignments should take place so that whichever comrade undertakes the treasury is not overburdened.

MOTION No. 5:

The perspective for 1917 West must be rethought by those comrades who remain in the OC in the coming period. Obviously the literary activity of the OC must be in accord with the available capacity and other priorities. After some informal discussion with the comrades we propose that the next issue, which is already in a fairly advanced stage of preparation, be restricted to 8 pages of 8.5X11 size (perhaps two 17X11 sheets folded in half) and that it be produced initially in somewhat modest quantities and that it be photocopied either with donated or union labor. We anticipate that future issues will be on single sheets of paper with a masthead. These will contain one or possibly two leaflet-type items similar to the old *Spartacist West*.

Minutes submitted and
approved 16 October 1992

Logan: Report On Developments—10/20/92

From: BABT

Subj: Report on developments

(Excerpt)

Dear comrades,

Before the BABT meeting on Saturday Barbara noticed that she was unable to access Compuserve, and that she got the message that the password was incorrect. I confirmed this, and mentioned it to Fred, who simply said that I had been fiddling with the system most recently. I reported the breakdown in our Compuserve link to Toronto by telephone immediately.

Early in the meeting was a discussion of the general internal situation, and in particular of the IS minutes of Friday 16 October which contain the package centering on the reduction of the BABT to an Organising Committee.

On about the third round Fred said that the minutes marked the transformation of the organisation into a cult, and that he was resigning. He handed in his keys, and said the phone, Compuserve link and bank account were in his name. He said he'd give us until Wednesday to make arrangements for the phone, that he'd already cut us off Compuserve, and that he would retain the money until all organisational bills in his name were paid, when he would transfer the remaining funds to the organisation. I believe he will be scrupulously honest.

He said that the PRG had "entered" the BT and had successfully transformed it. He said that he accepted that I was a revolutionary, but that revolutionary objectives could not be achieved by cultist methods. He said that he did not resign in a friendly manner, but that he held no personal grudges against anyone in the room except Barbara.

He said he would send us copies of *MP* which would carry our formal programme.

He then left the meeting. . . .

CGs
Bill

Letter from Adaire/PRG—10/18/92

To IS

From Adaire

Copies All points

Subject IS motions re BABT

Dear Comrades

I support motion 2, IS minutes #33, "... that comrade Smith be immediately indefinitely suspended from the IEC...."

I also wish to indicate my support for motion 1 regarding comrade Riker's compliance with the financial directive previously issued by the IS; motion 3 which reduces the BABT to an Organising Committee; motion 4 regarding the treasurer of BABT; and motion 5 regarding future issues of *1917 West*.

I do this with sadness but believe these measures are crucial if the BABT problems are to be rectified.

Comradely

Adaire

Letter from David/PRG—10/18/92

FROM: DAVID

TO: ALL POINTS

COPIES:

Dear Comrades,

I support motion two of the October 16 IS minutes (#33) proposing to immediately indefinitely suspend Comrade Smith from the IEC. As the appendices to the IS minutes show, Comrade Smith's October 7 letter suggesting he would abide by decisions of the IS can not be considered a serious statement of intent - this is demonstrated by both the cynical tone of Smith's letter and, more importantly, his subsequent vote at the BABT meeting of October 10.

Indeed, I support all five motions passed at the IS meeting regarding the Bay Area.

CG's

David

Letter from Kalisch-Monsees/GS-Berlin—10/18/92

FROM: Kalisch + Monsees

TO: IS/IEC

COPIES: ALL POINTS

SUBJECT: MOTIONS OF IS-MEETING # 33

Dear comrades,

we support the motions No.1, No. 3, No. 4 and No. 5.

We oppose the motion No. 2.

Commentary:

Fact is that Comrades Smith finally declared in his statement of 7. October to uphold Bolshevik discipline in future (of course we noted his impudent tone in his declaration). His further action, in fact, did not contradict this statement.

To suspend a full member of the IEC should be one of the last resort of an international Trotskyist tendency. The Menshevik tendencies of Comrade Smith are obvious, but we think also for the development of the BABT-OC an international fight would be helpful. In order to conduct such a fight Smith needs access to IEC-informations and voting right in the IEC. So therefore we should reconsider the IEC-quality of Comrade Smith at the next international conference.

Comradly Kalisch, Monsees

Motions by Logan—10/24/92

From: Bill (Bay Area)

To: All points

Copies: All points

Subject: BABT meeting of Friday 23 October

Dear comrades,

The following drafted in consultation with other comrades and moved by me were passed:

That the BABT, having received the IS minutes of 16 October, notes that it accepts its motions number 3 (reducing the BABT to an Organizing Committee) and number 5 (reducing the scale of 1917 West), and will be bound by those motions in its conduct and decisions.

-all For except Gerald opposed and Barbara not voting.

Furthermore the BABT believes that these decisions are appropriate at this time.

-all For except Gerald opposed and Barbara not voting.

In view of the extra responsibilities cde Boyd has acquired as treasurer, cde Trent will take over as OC minutes secretary.

-unanimous.

Contacting will be the first priority of the OC in the next period. The contacts chair should produce written monthly contacts reports. With the departure of cde Dorn, cde Smith will become contacts chair.

[Amendment adding the following sentence]

Cde Trent will assist in the production of monthly reports.

-amendment passed unanimously

-substantive motion as amended passed unanimously.

The BABT has done useful work in Copwatch for five months, but this work has to date produced only two real contacts, neither of whom is yet recruitable, or likely to be so in the medium term. The organiser shall ensure that Susan and Sam are kept in close contact. The OC hereby decides to move towards the early disbanding of the Copwatch fraction and to drastically reduce work in this milieu. The fraction's personnel should be treated as individual contacts and involved wherever possible in discussion and work with the OC. All obligations made to date with Copwatch will be carried out. No new obligations will be entered into. Over the next month cde Boyd will come off the Copwatch Report Committee and cde Smith will come off the Casework Committee. One or more comrades will for a time attend Copwatch general meetings with a view to presenting our views in the most political/programmatic fashion. [Amendment to add to the end] We will attempt to have an extract from our Cops, Crime and Capitalism leaflet published in the Copwatch Report.

- all For except Gerald Abstaining.

-the substantive motion as amended, all For except
Gerald Opposed.

That the OC may over the next period develop an orientation to a particular defence campaign.

-unanimous

It was accepted that in order to fulfill responsibilities already entered into, or to carry out such a defence campaign, it might be appropriate for comrades to attend meetings of various Copwatch committees without being members of those committees.

That tactical decision-making relevant to fallout from the Riker resignation must be flexible and centralised. Cde Logan will make operational decisions for the BABT until his departure, and cde Smith thereafter. However, day-to-day decisions must be made in subordination to the IS, and wherever possible in consultation with it.

[Amendment, moved Smith]

To replace "cde Smith" with "cde Boyd"

-amendment passed

unanimously

-substantive motion

as amended passed unanimously

CGs Logan

Letter to Logan 10/28/92

FROM: Riker
TO: Logan
SUBJECT: Making BABT whole
COPIES: All IEC
Dear Bill,

This is to confirm our conversation of yesterday. As you will remember, I offered to delay publication of the internal documents, motions, letters and IEC minutes surrounding the attempt to suppress BABT's right to publish local propaganda for 14 days.

What I expect to happen in return is that the BABT will be returned to the state it was when we made the agreement of October 3rd. Further, I expect that the IEC will withdraw the draconian (not to mention bureaucratic) motions of October 16th.

For the record, the following are the October 3rd motions:

- 1 The organisational status of the North American units of the IBT has never been established. At present each branch is directly subordinate to the IS and the IEC. There is a difference on whether they should be organised as a single North American section or as a Canadian and a US section. Discussion on this difference should continue, and a decision should be made at the next international conference.
- 2 Any full branch or section has the right to produce its own propaganda. This right is not absolute, but subject to the following conditions.
 - a The membership internationally has the right to discuss any major tactical decision planned by any branch before the branch makes its decision (insofar as possible, depending on the urgency of the matter).
 - b Propaganda must conform to the line and perspectives of the international as a whole.
 - c The international as a whole has the right to limit, or in unusual circumstances veto, major expenditures of human or financial resources.
- 3 The financial policies which emerged from the fusion conferences of 1990 make all money held by all units of the organisation the property of the international organisation as a whole. OCs, branches and sections are custodians of all money, subject to the direction of higher bodies. The forthcoming international conference should seek to establish more detailed guidelines on the financial relationships between branches and sections on the one hand and the international organisation on the other.
- 4 Any international leadership should encourage initiatives in the branches consistent with the programme and perspectives of the tendency, and should not unreasonably drain branches of the funds necessary to carry out such initiatives. Branch initiatives may also involve fundraising outside the membership for special local projects. The international leadership should not frustrate such initiatives by insisting that funds so raised be devoted projects outside the branch.

However, the contributions of established financial supporters of the international tendency and its programme are more akin to the general income of the organisation than to income generated through special initiatives. While a proportion of this money should appropriately be devoted to branch needs, it is not appropriate for a branch to circumvent the central control of funds by claiming a general right over such money for local projects.

In addition, I want the assurance that there will be no reprisals against Comrade Smith.

If the IEC agrees to these conditions and withdraws the motions of October 16th, I will not publish the material in my possession.

If however, I have not heard from you ("clearly and unambiguously and in writing"), by 6 P.M. November 11th, every Trotskyoid political party, grouping, sect, or coven will get a typeset, bound copy of selected documents with an appropriate introduction.

Keep in touch.
With regards,
Riker

Letter to Logan from Clarke—10/28/92

Logan:

I have been told that you and Dorn will return to New Zealand on the twenty-eighth. Before you go, I want a written apology for the violation of my hospitality when Dorn used my house to receive and forward secret reports.

For the past two years, I have supported BT in many ways. One way was to allow contacts and members to stay in my house while visiting the Bay Area. I do not enjoy company and rarely allow anyone into my house. I made an exception for the BT. I wanted members and potential members to be able to visit the Bay Area without expense for the party; I also wanted to share the visitor burden with Smith and Boyd out of consideration for their privacy and their many contributions to the organization. I only expected to be treated with courtesy and respect by party members. Dorn has violated that trust and you have supported her in this violation of "communist morality."

Communist morality may mean something different to me than to you and to other members of the Bolshevik Tendency. To me it means that we as Communists know that we cannot expect to be treated honestly and honorably by the bourgeoisie. Right now, we live in a very bad period and we are ignored, but should we become a potential threat, we will be jailed and killed at worst, slandered at the best. We can expect fair treatment only from ourselves and others who are honest members of the workers' movement. The honesty in our dealings with each other is part of our program. This principled behavior, even during fierce political arguments, tells potential recruits that our idea of politics is not the expedient and corrupt behavior typical of political hacks. Our idea of politics is broader and more ambitious; we really do want to change the world. We want special treatment and favors for no one; we treat each other fairly. Part of that fair treatment is to not act behind another's back, to fight political fights politically within the organization and to not succumb to the smallness of the organization by forming cliques.

Dorn's reports are nasty snipes against my companion and former friends. Worst, the BABT could not defend themselves against such descriptions because Dorn acted secretly. My home was used to support actions I abhor. An apology is a small reparation.

S/Clarke

Letter from Riker to Logan—11/10/92

FROM: Riker

TO: Logan

SUBJECT: Publication of BT Internal Documents

COPIES: All IEC

Dear Bill,

I have been in contact with BABT supporters Mark, Keith, Dan and James and, at their request, I am (against my better judgement), extending the deadline for a response to my letter of October 28th another 14 days until 6 p.m. on November 25th.

Hoping to hear from you before then.

Regards
Riker

BABT Motions—11/25/92

Comrades:

The following two motions regarding Oren and Leisler were moved and discussed at the November 21 Bay Area O.C. meeting. The motions were voted counterpoised, and motion number two was approved.

Trent

MOTION #1

Whereas the tradition the IBT claims to uphold, including the political bandit cult, the so-called Spartacist/ICL, have never required as a condition for membership that comrades relocate, and,

Whereas in their letters of application for membership Oren and Leisler have clearly stated that:

1 - "Riker and Smith were wrong to violate democratic centralism" and that they will

2 - "Propound and defend" our program and they will

3 - "Follow the procedures of internal discipline, including obedience [Their word -G.S.] to the instructions of the I.S." and

Whereas genuine Trotskyists, as opposed to cultists, are not interested in bureaucratic/administrative

means of thought control,

Be it resolved that the BABT demands that the IEC immediately accept Oren and Leisler into the BABT branch of the IBT.

MOTION #2

Since Oren and Leisler have re-worded their applications to meet concerns raised by their conduct in our internal disputes, the BABT believes they can function properly in our group.

We therefore recommend that the IS/IEC approve their applications for membership in the IBT pending the outcome of their visits to Wellington and Berlin.

We further urge the IS/IEC and the relevant locals to respond to their travel requests in an expeditious and timely manner.

Letter from Logan to BABT Supporters—11/25/92

From: Bill Logan

To: Mark & Keith (via BABT)

Copies: All Points

Subject: Your letters on membership & travel

Dear comrades Mark and Keith,

I have been asked to reply to your letters of application to the IEC dated 20 November, and also your letters of the same date regarding travel to the PRG and the GS, which have been referred to the IEC.

We welcome your proposed visits to the New Zealand and German sections of the IBT which will provide a valuable opportunity for the exploration of your reservations and doubts about the organisation, and differences with it. These visits will help us - and no doubt you as well - in considering questions pertaining to your membership.

We would of course arrange for your accommodation in comrades' homes, and for meetings with the membership for full discussions.

Technical arrangements, timing, and so on should be arranged with the PRG and the GS, but in general we believe that these trips should take place as soon as practicable and be for the longest practicable duration.

This is unfortunately not the very best time for a political visit New Zealand, as we approach the Christmas/summer holidays, but even between Christmas and New Year, when the number of comrades in Wellington will be at its lowest, we would be able to arrange meetings with a considerable proportion of the membership.

If the German comrades have any particular considerations about timing they will be in touch with you.

In any case it might be useful if you could send specific details with regard to timing to the PRG and the GS before making firm bookings.

We do not see this as a precondition for your visits, but we would appreciate before those visits some written material from you. It would be a useful contribution to clarification of our differences. You were able to provide us with an outline of your "serious reservations about the health of democratic centralism in the organization". You talk of certain unspecified "provocations" by the IS. Could you explain that? And you talk of certain actions of Fred as "wrong". Beyond a moral evaluation, could you please outline your assessment of the proper political measures to have taken in regard to those actions?

Communist greetings
Bill Logan
for the IEC

Letter from Boyd to IEC—11/27/92

(Excerpt)

To: IEC Members

From: Boyd

Re: BABT Update (Oren/Leisler and Copwatch Fraction)

Comrades,

At the last Copwatch fraction meeting on November 15th I motivated the basic points of our internal BABT motion on the Copwatch fraction. That motion was passed with Logan's own amendment as follows:

The BABT has done useful work in Copwatch for 5 months, contacts but this work has to date produced only two real neither of whom is yet recruitable, or likely to be so in the medium term. The organizer shall ensure that Susan and Sam are kept in close contact. The OC hereby decides to move toward the early disbanding of the Copwatch fraction and to drastically reduce work in this milieu. The fraction's personnel should be treated as individual contacts and involved wherever possible in discussion and work with the OC. All obligations made to date in Copwatch will be carried out. No new obligations will be entered into. Over the next month cde. Boyd will come off the Copwatch Report committee and cde. Smith will come off the Casework committee. One or more comrades will for a time attend Copwatch general meetings with a view to presenting our views in the most political -programmatic fashion.

Amendment:

We will attempt to have an extract from our Cops, Crime and Capitalism" leaflet published in the Copwatch Report.

I decided not read the entire motion because I did not want to read them the part about how we were going to deal with them. At anyrate I put forward the following motion at the fraction meeting:

To disband the Copwatch fraction as it was formed for its original purpose. That fraction members will continue to meet for the purpose of working out a focus for future activity. Two possible areas of future activity might be a public forum or a defense campaign.

There was much discussion and it was not rancorous but I did run up against uniform opposition to disbanding the fraction. They all wanted to continue to meet. Smith was at the meeting and though I don't recall his exact intervention he did not make any attempt to support my motion. He had opposed the motion to disband the fraction even though he agreed that the work in Copwatch should be brought to an end. He obviously likes the idea of keeping the group together for his own reasons. There was no real animosity toward the BT having come into the fraction with a motion of its own as Smith had feared.

Dan led the argument for keeping the group together and moved the following motion:

The CW fraction, as presently constituted, will continue its existence as such. Standing members of CW fraction are Boyd, Dan, James, Leisler, Oren and Smith. As a standing fraction we will continue biweekly meetings until the fraction decides otherwise. The fraction will conduct discussions as to future tasks and perspectives and will make future decisions based on a majority vote.

Amended by Oren:

Copwatch is not a good prime focus for Trotskyists' political activity and the fraction is in agreement that we should move carefully to disengage from CW work in a timely fashion.

...
I have just finished talking with Trent and passed along Riley's desire to stop meeting with these guys. Trent and I agree that there is no useful purpose in continuing any regular meetings with these guys without knowing the purpose in advance. Given recent developments the fraction certainly no longer serves our purpose of trying recruit the fraction members; one of the most important reason for it. I should work out with the IS how to disengage at the Dec. 6th meeting, which may well be called off by them anyway.

Although they are becoming increasingly hostile it is agreed that we are willing to work with these guys in the future.

Yesterday morning at 11am I met with Leisler to give him our letters welcoming his and Oren's travel plans and urging them to write us in more detail about their differences.

Leisler repeated Oren's complaint that they wanted their applications dealt with separately from the travel letters. I told them that we desired otherwise. We felt that it was only sensible to travel first, check us out more, let us talk to them more and then consider their applications. In answer to his belief that we were ignoring

their applications I referred him to the part of the letter which requested greater elaboration on their differences with us on this dispute. Leisler was resistant to putting any more in writing. They seem to have contracted the Riker/Smith phobia "fear of writing."

...

Without any animus I told him that it was politically "dishonest" to write such short membership applications which avoided any detail on their differences with us in this dispute. A dispute in which the principle of democratic centralism is the main issue and a dispute in which they have drawn definite conclusions which tend toward the Riker/Smith minority. I reiterated that if he and Oren were serious about their bids for membership they should not want to hide differences. And that it was only smart politics for an organization to attempt to know as much as possible in advance the politics of prospective members.

...

I stated that it was my personal opinion that we are not going to recruit individuals who have a minority position who will then become a numerical majority in the branch. I said we are done with this dispute, we want to move forward with the work of the majority, look outward, try to recruit and stop the very destructive infighting. I made it clear that this did not mean we would be opposed to discussing any aspect of principle, tactics or organization that may touch on this dispute, but that the bottom lines have been decided. We are not going to allow this dispute to be reified.

He again stated his intent not be anybody's handraiser and that they did not see themselves as being in a bloc with Smith. I said I believed him but that it might not take any votes for them to get the branch all tied up in an internal dispute that continues to hamstring the work of the majority. It's one thing to have to deal with such disputes among members but it's quite another to knowingly recruit people who agree in important ways with the positions of a minority.

I repeated several times in the discussion that they were being dishonest politically by refusing to respond to our request for political discussion on their differences with us. I told him that it was not enough to have formal programmatic agreement; as they should know a fundamental aspect of the regime question is that a group can have a formally correct program and be unhealthy. They have written that they have concerns about the health of our organization, then they should elaborate.

...

So, we wait and see if they respond in writing. I imagine they will put something in writing. Leisler said "Well, I may write something but they won't like it." I urged him to be pedagogical and to avoid the personalist slander of Riker and Smith. Oren and Leisler are what are sometimes referred to as "emotional boys." Leisler somewhat less so than Oren who is oftentimes as bad as Smith. The two of them in this branch with Smith would be a "living nightmare" which you may know by now I have had enough of.

...

All for now.
Boyd

Document by former Toronto BT Members

"As a tactical approach to the BABT problem we should centre on the narrow issue of their refusal to obey the instructions of the IS to prepare a written proposal for 1917 West."

(Logan to Riley, 8 July/92)

Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency

In the course of the past year, a serious dispute has developed within the IBT between the leadership of the organisation, centred around the IS/IEC, and the most senior members of BABT, comrades Riker and Smith. As in almost every major fight in a Bolshevik organization, the fundamental issue is partly obscured by secondary and tertiary items of contention between the rival groupings. It is necessary for those who seek an understanding of this dispute to sift through the documentation, in its chronology, and place events, written words, etc., in their proper perspective.

In this connection, it would be appropriate at this point, for the authors of the statement to make known, for the comrades unaware, our interest in this fight, our inadvertent part in it, and our historic membership in and relationship to the (I)BT.

Comrade Nelson was a member of the TBT local from the fall of 1984 until the spring of 1991. He was a participant in all BT conferences therein, including the BT/PRG fusion conference in 1990. He was also a TBT local executive member.

Comrade Williams was a member of the TBT local from the summer of 1986 until the summer of 1990, with the exception of six-month stint in the BABT in 86-87. He was, like Nelson, a participant at all conferences. He is also a former member of the Trotskyist League of Canada.

Since their respective resignations from the IBT, Comrades Nelson and Williams have been loyal sympathizers. They have been so much part of the TBT's public face that Comrade Riley, in his TBT organizers report of July/92, writes:

"[Nelson and Williams] are still around enough that the Trotskyist League does not suspect they are not in."

During a 23 October/92 trip to Montreal to intervene in a united platform, "Spoil Your Ballot" campaign, it came to our attention that comrade Riker had 'quit' the organisation. It was our distinct impression that this was an especially sensitive issue given the way it was brought up. The recent oh-so-hushed fashion of the relaying of information convinced us of the necessity to investigate this matter further.

Upon contacting cde. Riker, he sent us the internals of the last year, which centred around the recent fight. We believe, given the following study of these documents, that cde. Riker made the right choice in distributing them, at least to loyal sympathizers.

Riley's Tangled 'Request'

The pre-production period of 1917W lacked the necessary communication between Comrades Riley and Smith. In principle we see nothing wrong with asking for a written proposal. An international micro-propaganda group of such geographical dispersity needs to know what its other locals are up to. We wish Comrade Riley had passed a motion in the IS requesting a written proposal for 1917W at the beginning of the project. Leninist leaders need to operate in this manner, without exception.

The 'request' for a written proposal at the completion of 1917W was interpreted by Riker/Smith as a conscious attempt to indefinitely stall production. Riker/Smith, in turn, went ahead with the publication of 1917W.

"What a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive."

Aside from the bureaucratic formalism of asking for a written proposal on a project which was already near completion, it is instructive to note the chronological inconsistencies and outright dishonesty of cde. Riley regarding this 'request.'

Riley writes:

"In January the IS, in minutes published and circulated to every IEC member including cde. Gerald, outlined some guidelines and asked for a written proposal from the BABT." (our emphasis)

"The IS made its formal request in mid-January. Two months later the paper appeared and yet in the meeting Fred has the nerve to claim that they did not write a proposal because of the danger that any discussion would hold up the paper!"

(Contretemps, March)

Not once, but twice, cde. Riley insists that the 'formal request' was made in mid-January. But

as is clear from the IS minutes to which he refers, there was no such request:

Re 6): This is the first opportunity we have had, as a body, to consider *1917 West*. While we welcome initiative on the part of locals, we are also concerned about any added burden that local projects may place upon our capacities and finances at a time when our North American membership is shrinking. We therefore suggest the following guidelines for *1917 West*: a) that it should limit itself to items of chiefly local interest in the Bay Area, and in no way attempt to compete with *1917*, either in content or sales; b) that the first issue be viewed as an experiment, and that any decisions about further publication be made in light of our overall needs in North America; c) that BAPT expend no more than \$150 of organizational funds for the publication of this issue, and that any production expenses over this amount be raised independently by BAPT; d) that all proposed articles be submitted in advance to the IS for approval;

(IS minutes #21, 15 January/92)

Why did cde. Riley feel compelled to rewrite history? Could it be because the 'request' was not made by the IS? Let us check. In the next IS meeting of 12 February, the minutes read:

"2b) We have received neither the requested sales figures for *1917* nos. 8,9, and 10 from BAPT, nor any written proposal from BAPT concerning the first issue of *1917 West* (including projected production methods, cost, quantity to be printed, etc.) (See attached letters from Riley);"

(IS minutes #22,
12 February/92)

So the first time anything about a written proposal is mentioned by the IS is not mid-January, but mid-February. And more importantly, it is mentioned not in the form of a 'formal request,' but in the form of a complaint that the non-existent request had not been granted. Curious indeed. Perhaps a quote from one of the attached letters from Riley will shed some light on this tangled web:

"Just so that everything is perfectly clear:

1) the IS must first explicitly approve the articles (before) they go to the printer, or a xerox machine or anywhere else.

2) before any money is spent on this venture (including the \$150.00 proposed) we want to have a clear and explicit proposal, with costs from the local. Only after a proposal has been discussed and explicitly approved by the IS may any money be spent. So far we have yet to see a proposal."

(letter from Tom, 28 January)

"Just so that everything is perfectly clear," the formal request for a written proposal was made, not by the IS, but by...comrade Riley! It is then referred to by the IS, both in the 12 February minutes, and again in the 6 March minutes:

"The problems with *1917 West* appear to be coming to ahead. So far there has been no proposal from BAPT as requested by the IS."

(IS minutes #23, 6 March/92)

A thorough analysis of this bureaucratic sleight-of-hand seems to pose more questions than it answers. If it is indeed comrade Riley who made the formal request for a written proposal, is that request binding on the BAPT local? Doesn't it seem 'perfectly clear,' given the subsequent sets of IS minutes, that comrades Cullen and Nason had no problem with this procedure?

Do letters from comrade Riley constitute official decision making?

If so, why does cde. Riley feel obliged to refer to an IS request which was never made—in January? If not, and we sincerely hope these letters do not, then there was never an official request for a written proposal.

We suspect that there must have been a pressing reason why the IS chose to overlook such details. It seems, at least from the accounts of Cullen, Riley and Logan, that there was no opposition to the idea of *1917 W* in itself. It was when the articles were sent for approval, and when the extra funds were raised, that the proverbial goal-post was led to roam.

"...the decision spelled out in the IS minutes seems reasonable. Unfortunately, from the copy received by us on January 27 (with a note by Smith to return comment by "Tuesday"), *1917 West* comes across as simply an alternative *1917*: clearly in contradiction to the IS decision."

(David, 29 January)

"I'm not so sure that I am convinced of the wisdom of *1917 West*....The decision to publish this, even in the framework outlined by the IS, is a decision to commit considerable amounts of the international's resources to the project."

(Logan, 30 January)

"...whatever the felt needs for an issue of the journal in the Bay Area, it was clearly inap-

propriate for the Bay Area comrades to try to fill the need by going ahead and doing another version of 1917."

(Marcus, 6 February)

All these letters were written at the same time as cde. Riley requested a written proposal. Please note that Smith wanted all comments returned by 'Tuesday.' It is clear that Riley's unofficial request was an attempt to stall the publication of 1917W. Riley's subsequent rewriting of history was an attempt to make it look like the IS asked for a proposal before they received the copy to edit.

The question of a local or national right to publish propaganda is obscured during this fight. There is, of course, always a discussion of line questions, and ultimately the higher bodies prevail. That there would be a dispute over the political tilt or content of 1917W was inevitable. But as cde. Riker made clear, these higher bodies do not have the final say on such secondary issues. Moreover, since there was an actual agreement made on the 'prescribed' line question during the IBT/GIVI fusion conference, we cannot see the logic in counterposing a 'national' section of eight to a local of four. The whole discussion of 'national' sections is absurd on its face.

In cde. Riley's 'Contretemps,' there is some abstract speculation about the IS "request[ing] a proposal from either the PRG or GS regarding the project of a new press," and how "they would have had exactly the same obligation to comply as the BABT." But, according to cde. Riley:

"There has been no such need for a request because these comrades have kept us pretty fully informed regarding all their plans and projections for their journal."

We have to wonder what more 'plans and projections' cde. Riley could have possibly wanted.

Logan Arrives

After the publication of 1917 West cde. Logan arrived in the Bay Area. We contend that the idea of sending cde. Logan to BABT to ease tensions between the local and the international was in itself a good one. We were optimistic, reading through the chronology of events, when we came upon cde. Logan's 17 March/92 letter to the IEC, entitled, "Developments."

We believe that the proposal of a 'buffer' between cde. Riley and the BABT local, as well as that of the BABT local to "be encouraged to write frequent letters for international distribution," are sound and encouraging ones.

We were disappointed to discover that this seemingly sincere attempt to resolve differences was given a lifespan of approximately 12 days, whereupon cde. Riley, in response to the tapes of the 17 March/92 BABT local meeting, released a 36-page document entitled, "Contretemps, Democratic Centralism and 1917 West." So much for the "buffer"—so much for the fact that the IS/IEC "didn't want to upset the applecart without first having explored every possibility of amicable solution [JC]."

We remind comrades of a citation from *Spartacist*/66, which is requoted in 1917#1:

"the Healy-Banda machine subordinates real political issues of agreement and disagreement to the exigencies of organizational issues and personal prestige politics. That organisational tendency is itself a political issue of the first order." (*Spartacist*, June-July 1966).

(1917#1,

The Robertson School
of Party Building)

Logan's 17 March/92 "resolutions" posed an important test for the IBT leadership to demonstrate, in action, whether or not it was a dynamic political force capable of leading the BABT towards reconciliation with the International. We contend that the IS/IEC could not raise itself above this 'organisational issue,' and instead used it as a talisman to justify all subsequent factional provocations.

The Mismeasurement of Riker/Smith

It is no secret that cdes. Riker and Smith are not known for their art of diplomacy. Their longstanding personalist and abusive behaviour towards fellow comrades has been a problem for the BABT branch from the beginning. These unacceptable breaches of communist protocol played a central role in the failure of the consolidation of the LTT, as well as the failure of the BABT local to integrate itself into the new parameters of international collaboration.

The leadership's belated attempts to get a handle on the "BABT problem" were, in so far as they were sincere, well motivated. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions. It is our firm belief that cdes. Logan and Riley sought a shortcut to solve this problem—they turned on their telescopes:

"If comrades are tired from the strain of political life in this difficult period, or demoralized by it, they should not waste their time and energy trying to find scapegoats. If comrades feel that they cannot go on they should not spend their time trying to poke holes in the bottom of our boat."

(cde. Riley,
"Contretemps," March/92)

You see, Riker 'really' wants to go out of politics and Smith is 'really' an opportunist, so, if we push hard, Riker and Smith will expose themselves to those who 'really' don't understand what they're about.

This telescopic methodology becomes a danger in any organisation, however healthy, because it is premised on a belief that comrades are on a certain trajectory. It sets a dangerous precedent whereby the membership becomes accustomed to the leadership's use of the crystal ball. Comrades become slotted by the cognoscente as 'potential troublemakers,' 'potential mensheviks,' and 'potential quitters.' The membership absorbs this 'higher consciousness' through an increasingly passive attitude towards internal political life, eventually learning that the only time one can be truly zealous about one's political positions is after the leadership starts the crystal ball rolling.

In the case of the PRG, we have cde. Logan's duplicity towards 1917W. Despite his earlier conciliatory tone regarding its publication, cde. Logan too has secret access to the telescope of 'higher consciousness':

"[the decision to publish 1917W]...was outright defiance of the international's right to discuss the matter. That's a statement you're not a part of us any more. It's a conscious provocation. It's a declaration of outright, decisive, end-game political struggle. We were correct to conduct ourselves accordingly."

(Logan, 28 September/92)

Let's observe how, a mere week later, this is absorbed and reflected by the base:

"It is just that rather than argue these differences out, in a principled fashion, they choose to do their own thing.

"So fuck the organisation, fuck the leadership—we're all shit."

(Mike G., 7 October/92)

Clods, Money and Intrigue

If the leadership is convinced that cdes. Riker and Smith are going astray, then what better means of furnishing the evidence than having a factional agent write secret reports. If she is caught carrying out this anti-Leninist practise, then so what, because cdes. Riker and Smith broke discipline first.

The talisman of the 'formal request' once again casts its spell over the entire organisation. If party members don't come on board on this issue, then every bureaucratic measure is justified.

Even finance questions are not immune to this 'understanding'. The repeated attempts of cde. Riker to receive financial information regarding the standing of all locals are referred to by cde. Riley as...

"of a piece with [Riker's] notion that there should be no distinction between IEC members and new recruits when it comes to the availability of information within the organisation [?]. This is the same comrade who for months (from January until March) thought it extremely shrewd tactically to refuse to answer the repeated requests and instructions of the elected leading bodies[?]."

(Nason/Riley, 2 October/92)

The question of financial accountability to the ranks is a very important one for a Marxist organisation. Though we certainly don't think that new recruits should have access to such sensitive information, there must surely be accountability to the ranks generally. We find it odd, that when the BABT treasurer requests financial information, the IS finds it necessary to issue a formal statement on this matter. It reads, in part:

"[Financial] information is for the use of the IS/IEC and is therefore available to IEC members who request it. Because financial information is potentially sensitive we do not make a practise of having it generally available. Non-IEC comrades who want information can request it, and the IS/IEC can decide whether or not to release it." (our emphasis) (IS minutes #26, 9 July 92)

Now watch closely as IS minutes #26 are cast into the memory hole:

"Cde. Riker has no standing in the IEC and as such is not entitled to ask for or receive financial reports." (our emphasis)

(Nason/Riley, 2 October/92)

Another tangled 'request'? To paraphrase cde. Riley, our procedural rulebook should read:

"If I, a duly elected leader, request something, that request must be granted, irrespective of any IS decision or non-decision. Conversely, if something is requested of me, irrespective of any IS decision or non-decision, that request will be ignored."

Democratic Centralism

In the final stage of this self-fulfilling prophesy, much was made of the fact that Smith and Riker voted against elementary motions on democratic centralism during the 19 September/92 BABT local meeting. Motions of such an elementary nature, especially those put forward during a dispute over whether or not there was a breach of democratic centralism, serve not to clarify the issue, but to drown it. This argument was correctly made by Smith, in the form of the countermotion put forward during the BABT 19 September/92 local meeting:

"Ritual motions which on the surface seem to be for apple pie and motherhood have no place in this discussion. The Logan motion is a cynical attempt to provide a moral and political justification for any measures which the 'IS' may care to carry out in the future".

(Motion by Smith,
19 September
BABT local meeting)

Of course one could argue that Riker and Smith should still not have voted against the 'pro-democratic centralism' motions. But although abstentionism might have been a favourable option, voting for these motions in reality justifies their motivations. It is clear to us that these motions were designed to 'smoke them out,' a cryptic not-only-Robertsonite term which translates politically into factional provocation.

The 'end-game political struggle,' prompted in reality by the leadership, came on the heels of the 'democratic centralism' motions. Now that Riker and Smith had been 'exposed' as anti-Leninists, it became just a technical matter of liquidating the branch. The IS, with funds now in hand, rammed through a series of draconian motions, downgrading the BABT to OC status, removing cde. Smith from the IEC, and removing cde. Riker as BABT treasurer.

The Logan/Riley bureaucratic practise within the IBT is not a political/organisational, but rather a personal/methodological hangover from the international Spartacist tendency. The political/organisational implications of this is simply that the base absorbs not only the formal programmatic doctrines and practices of the organisation as a whole, but also the informal methodology of the leadership. The student learns not only by instruction, but by example.

"Such techniques have a price. They not only affect the quality of political life in the group, but also tend to develop a momentum of their own. Tomorrow's dissident learns from the experience of today's, and thus any expression of political difference tends to become increasingly covert. Ultimately in the SL the 'shortcut' became its opposite as the very techniques which were designed to prevent costly splits, minimize cadre loss and safeguard the organisation's programmatic integrity ended up in a massive haemorrhaging of the membership."

(The Road to Jimstown)

Nelson/Williams,
December/92

The “Holier than Thou” Brigade Comes to the Rescue

We in the International Bolshevik Tendency are indeed fortunate. We are perhaps the first revolutionary organization in history to have a periphery more ‘loyal’ and dedicated to democratic centralism than its own membership. In San Francisco, we have people knocking down our door trying to become members to save the rest of us from the horrors of a totalitarian bureaucracy that rules the IBT with an iron fist (even though one of these people quit in the first place because he did not want to pay his dues). Even in Toronto, a couple of ex-members, who are not so eager to rejoin as far as we know, have taken up ex-member Riker’s crusade to stop the rise of, if not the actual full-fledged existence of “Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency”. How generous!

When we read the document by ex-members Williams and Nelson, Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency, we were shocked. We were shocked to learn that perhaps our leadership, consisting of that diabolical duo of Logan and Riley, follow the “personal and methodological” practices of the international Spartacist tendency leadership! Maybe we are well on the way to a Rileytown, or maybe, to a Loganville.

But wait a minute. From whom do these accusations come? How do they substantiate their claims and most importantly, what do they hope to achieve?

Our valiant warriors, cdes. Ken Williams and Ron Nelson, have chosen to join ranks with ex-member Riker on the issues that arose in our group over the publication of *1917 West*... or have they? On the issue of whether or not it was right to publish *1917 West*, as ex-member Riker did, consciously breaking the guidelines given to the Bay Area local by the International Secretariat, where do our knights in shining armour stand? They choose not to take a position. No matter how hard you look, you will not find a decisive statement one way or the other on this central issue. We guess they don’t think this was important. Do they take a position on whether or not an IBT local has the absolute right, as cdes. Riker and Smith did, to spend the money it raises as it pleases? Again, not even a mention of the issue. Well, how about the failure of cdes. Riker and Smith to integrate the changes to *1917 West* articles as proposed by the IS? Once again, only silence from our knights. One has to assume silence is complicity.

For all their silence on the many issues coming out of the production of *1917 West* no. 1, it is amazing they still managed to fill some ten, singled-spaced pages with a ‘polemic’ on this very subject. What do they write about anyway? They chose to narrow the discussion to one, simplistic question: was the IS request for a formal proposal regarding the first issue of *1917 West* from the Bay Area local made legitimately?

Here is the essence of their ‘polemic’:

“Aside from [sic] the bureaucratic formalism of asking for a written proposal on a project which was already near completion, it is instructive to note the chronological inconsistencies and outright dishonesty of cde. Riley regarding this ‘request’.”

They substantiate this charge by saying cde. Riley, who happens to be a member of the IS, originally made the request for a proposal in the form of a letter, instead of a motion from the IS. We cannot believe these ex-members can seriously make this charge with a straight face! Since when can the IS not delegate one of its own members to make such a request from a local. Moreover, do cdes. Riker, Williams or Nelson actually believe that cde. Riley’s letter did not represent the will of the IS? This in itself is absurd, given the subsequent statements by the IS. But it is more absurd when we recall that cde. Riley, as the liaison of the IS, had made repeated verbal requests (over the telephone) for a proposal long before the letter by cde. Riley was sent. It is not only absurd, it is blatantly dishonest on the part of cde. Riker and his cohorts to promote the view that the proposal was an attempt to halt production. Only the most rotten cynics can sincerely believe there was a “sleight-of-hand” at work here.

Our valiant knights are dismayed that leading members of the organization (from every other local!) had reservations about the project. As if it constitutes some kind of conscious treachery to be reluctant to give the green light to a project that never had a coherent plan and was being hastily put together. What was the rush anyway? If anything it is to the credit of the leadership of the IBT that they saw something amiss in the haste with which the first issue of *1917 West* was put together. All you have to do is give the thing a quick glance to know its publication in its actual form was a mistake. Aside from spelling ‘Boshevik’ Tendency incorrectly, there were numerous poorly formulated arguments and misspelled picture captions. We still consider it an embarrassment. The Trotskyist League (ICL) here in Canada had a field day with *1917 West*, amusing themselves in public reading aloud all the poor political formulations and spelling mistakes in the journal. Even they could not believe it was our journal! One of their members asked cde. Frazier, quite sincerely, if the appearance of *1917 West* represented a split in our group. It took a lot to reply “no” to that question. But, after all, we are a democratic centralist group, and we must defend it as our publication.

Most of the concerns of the IEC (aside from the editing of the articles, which was obviously necessary) was about how *1917 West* would be published. Publication is the last stage in putting out a paper. It is clearly within the domain of the IS’s authority to question the method of production of the journal. The Bay Area (mis)leadership insisted on offsetting the journal as opposed to xeroxing it, raising the budget of the journal consider-

ably, without seriously considering its capacity to sell it. The comrades were perhaps less than forthcoming on cde. Riley's request for sales statistics of previous issues of 1917 because they knew that the numbers would not warrant offsetting 1917 West. What's the point of offsetting twice as many 1917 Wests that you could ever hope to sell?

Riker decided he would "solve" the disagreement he had with the international leadership by simply presenting them with a fait accompli and hoped the problem would go away. He not only circumvented the authority of the international leadership but also his own comrades in the Bay Area, possibly even cde. Smith. At least half of the Bay Area comrades did not know he went to the printer until after 1917 West was published! Herein lies the mistake made by Riker which he refuses to acknowledge.

So the main allegation of our crusaders' sermon, cde. Riley's allegedly dishonesty, is false. How about cde. Logan, the other half of this "bureaucracy"? What is his notorious role? His crime was going to the Bay Area trying to get Riker to try to defend what he did, i.e., violating discipline, on paper. For the longest time, Riker refused to do so. Riker, in fact, explicitly declared in response to Riley's Contretemps that he didn't want to be dragged into a discussion on the question. The documents that were eventually produced by this undeclared faction in the Bay Area were so pathetic that no one in the IBT, except their authors, agreed with them. Even our knights in not-so-shining armour fail to quote even a sentence from their arguments. So, what is so criminal in pressing, as cde. Logan did (in consultation with the international leadership), the Bay Area local's (mis)leadership to come clean on their attitude towards "apple pie and motherhood." No comrade should have voted against cde. Logan's motions, stating the basic organizational principles of our group, at the 19 September local meeting. Surely even if they believed the context was inappropriate, these motions were worth supporting. The dissidents were "put to the test" by the IS. It was a test the undeclared '1917 West' faction failed to pass.

Our crusaders conclude that the comrades were judged unfairly. It is unfair, for example, to say that Fred was going out of politics or that some bad appetites have been manifested. We're sorry if the feelings of our crusaders are hurt by this, but facts are facts. Cde. Riker made no secret of his desire to retire long before he actually did. Cde. Smith has made arguments in the course of the 1917 West discussion which we think could easily be labelled Menshevik or opportunist. In fact, we are surprised at the gall of these knights to suggest that cde. Riker did anything other than quit. They say he "quit" in quotes as if there was something else, more notorious perhaps, in the works. The fact remains that cde. Riker believed so much in his cause that he... quit!

Our knights perhaps think taking a hard stand on disciplining those responsible for wrongly publishing 1917 West #1 was provocative because... some people cannot tolerate such discipline! Well, this would indeed be interesting. It is a small matter that certain comrades are chiefly responsible for "the failure of the consolidation of the LTT, as well as the failure of the BAPT local to integrate itself into the new parameters of international collaboration", but is a crime when the IEC decides to set them straight. The standards they are a' changing. What we find a little confusing is that both cdes. Williams and Nelson attended the conference where the "press question" was brought up and voted against cde. Riker's view of a party press. Now they appear to support Riker when he violates discipline to ram through his substandard concept of a party journal!

But let us now turn to the two knights who churned out this rubbish. They have a little explaining to do. They make a point of parading their laurels in their sermon, as if they, as 'historic' members of the IBT, they have something intelligent to say in this dispute. Strangely, little is said about their own experience in Toronto. After all, if cde. Riley is a lying and treacherous bureaucrat, why not tell us of all the other abuses they suffered as long-time members under his tutelage in Toronto. They do not say whether cde. Riley behaved out of character in the 1917 West dispute or it was quite typical of their experience as members here in Toronto. Was this bureaucratic act a bolt from the blue or a pattern? No comment from our self-contented and pompous crusaders.

Bureaucracy is nothing to take lightly. If you see a pattern developing, then you should challenge it in an organized, political manner. But what have these two crusaders done politically for the last year to struggle against bureaucracy? Well, we do not believe it is inappropriate at this point to delve into the political lives of these two "knights".

We feel compelled to profile these two characters for others in the group so that we can have a clear picture of what's going on here. Cde. Nelson who has been a member since 1985, not 1984 as he claims, has had a rather chronic discipline problem in the group: From hanging up on the organizer who was giving him his schedule to breaking discipline on many occasions. He has the distinction of having received the most censures in our local for violating discipline. While active as a "loyal" sympathiser, Nelson has been reprimanded for freelancing with contacts, ordering members around on assignments, disagreeing with members in public and calling members "asshole" in public. Recently, when the Morgentaler Abortion Clinic in Toronto was bombed by neo-nazis, cde. Nelson said he did not want to go on the demonstration denouncing the bombing because he... wanted to play baseball.

Cde. Williams is not as undisciplined politically as cde. Nelson, but unfortunately, not much more serious politically. He resigned from the group because he claimed he could not afford it. At the same time, however, he had one of the highest incomes in the Toronto local. Ironically, Ken once commented to cde. Frazier that he felt cde. Nelson, of all people in the local, had a tendency to being bossy or bureaucratic. It is worth noting that neither of these two "dissidents" bothered coming to the meeting where their resignations were submitted. Both of

their contributions since their resignations have been erratic to say the least.

So it is interesting that this pair has decided to wait until now to write perhaps the most comprehensive document in their political lives for our organization. Our first question is why? In general, they have been moving away from political activity. At best, they could be called part-time revolutionaries (when it is convenient for them, of course). Their document states they have an interest in this fight, but what interest? We have not heard from these characters, except of course to demand that we reveal all and talk to them about Fred's resignation. As a serious group we are not in the practice of talking about internal matters with unserious people. We can only assume that the diatribe penned by these characters is a political suicide note.

So given the lack of their political activity, it is, at best, amusing that they are suddenly activated by a disloyal ex-member who would like to make life difficult for us. It is clear what this is what ex-member Riker wants to accomplish since he has threatened to publicly distribute our internal documents. We can imagine how our unscrupulous opponents, like the ICL, will use such documents. Riker couldn't care less about our group's survival, which is a shame since he has worked so long building it. Our two "dissidents" in Toronto share a similar perspective. Their document denounces bureaucratism in the IBT without proposing a solution. They have not even offered to join to solve the problem. They are happy enough to be pretentious armchair critics and watch the results from their comfortable sidelines. We would like to write off their document as a juvenile temper tantrum, but its intent, particularly in combination with Fred's threats to publish our internal material, is clearly to do damage to our group. They and their document should be judged accordingly.

cdes. Frazier and Fischer,
Toronto,
23 December 1992

Working Committee Letter of Application to IBT

"We believe that our programmatic agreement with the iSt provides a principled basis of unity."
(ET letter of membership
application to the iSt)

1 January/93

Dear Comrades,

We write to formally apply for membership in the IBT. As you are aware by this point, we consider ourselves a tendency in formal programmatic agreement with your organization, and as such, need to determine our organizational relationship to you.

Given the 1917 West/democratic-centralism fight of the past year, and our study of the internals documenting this dispute, we now think it inappropriate to join as individuals. Our newly formed tendency is itself an expression of your petty, bureaucratic treatment of loyal individuals seeking membership in your organization.

We understand, of course, that an acceptance of this application presupposes our stated intention to abide by the discipline of the organization, and by extension, to concur with the majority line on the BAPT dispute when dealing with external criticisms. We note however that an agreement on the norms of democratic-centralist functioning is not the same thing as an agreement on your implementation of it. An a priori condition that we agree with your interpretation or implementation of these norms can only be considered as a prerequisite that we must think as the leadership thinks. This is a prerequisite which, we hope you would agree, Marxists cannot accept.

In your 27 December letter to comrades Leisler and Oren, you write:

"It would be a useful contribution to clarification of our differences if you were able to provide us with an outline of your 'serious reservations about the health of democratic centralism in the organization'. You talk of certain unspecified 'provocations' by the IS. Could you explain that? And you talk of certain actions of Fred as 'wrong'. Beyond a moral evaluation, could you please outline your assessment of the proper political measures to have taken in regard to those actions?

"Furthermore, we need to know something of your views on democratic centralism—not merely on the matter of discipline, but more broadly on the Leninist principles of organization as you understand them, revolutionary leadership and the desirable norms of political life in an organization such as ours."

To ask comrades to write a political essay on democratic centralism seems to us to be quite inappropriate. Democratic centralism is a line question only in the sense that one formally agrees to abide by the rules of the organization, whether one agrees with them or not. That we have "serious reservations about the health of democratic centralism in the organization" is certainly true. An outline of these reservations is made in the

Bureaucratic Centralism in the IBTW document by comrades Nelson and Williams. If you seek explanation on the factional "provocations" by the IS, or comrade Riker's "wrong" behavior, we urge you to reread it.

As full members we would expect to be accorded minority rights, including the right to circulate our own internal bulletins. This is something we believe a healthy Leninist organization should have no problem with.

The work of reforging a Fourth International will go forward. We ask that you take our application seriously.

Yours for Leninism,
Clarke
Leisler
Nelson
Oren
Turner
Williams

Letter from the BT/IEC—1/19/93

From: Bill Logan for the IEC
To: Clarke
Leisler
Nelson
Oren
Turner
Williams
Copies: All Points
Please forward to addressees in your area
Date: Tuesday 19 January 1993
Subject: Response to letter of application

Dear comrades,

We have received your joint letter of application for membership of the IBT dated 1 January 1993. This is a preliminary response and we hope to continue organisation-to-organisation discussions in writing. You will understand this is the normal and appropriate process when the possibility of fusion is mooted. There are always considerable written exchanges, and for good reason: it is only in this way that programmatic clarity can be achieved. When the old External Tendency applied to rejoin the international Spartacist tendency there had been a considerable prior literary clarification of views. They already knew without any doubt where we stood, but we would have been pleased to engage in prolonged discussion if necessary.

The written character of discussion in our case, of course, is particularly called for in our actual circumstances of considerable geographic dispersal.

We seek unity with others who share the programme of socialist revolution as we understand it, and we know that your group considers itself close to our programme.

However we also perceive programmatic differences between us, in the broad sense that the programme of a group is everything that the group does and stands for. We are not entirely clear what those differences are, but if there were no differences - differences very important to you - your group would never have achieved its separate existence. We note that one of the people who signed your application for membership in the IBT is comrade Clarke, who felt moved to circulate (on approximately 19 October last year) the comment "Remember, [Jensen]. I have a long memory. If I can destroy you or any member of BT, I will do it." How would you suggest we evaluate this remark? How do you account for it?

If there were no differences we would expect that your application would have a less abrasive tone, and there would be no question of your wishing to establish an internal tendency in the IBT. You mention that "Our newly formed tendency is itself an expression of your petty, bureaucratic treatment of loyal individuals seeking membership in your organization." Could you please indicate to whom you are referring, and precisely what aspects of our treatment of them you find objectionable?

In deciding on your application we must first define and assess the importance of the differences. You presumably believe they are insufficient to be an obstacle to unity; that is not clear to us. We do not think it is illegitimate for us to ask you to help us decide by explaining to us very carefully in writing where you stand on the disputed questions, and the reasoning behind your positions.

It would appear that the main differences concern some aspects of the party question and certain matters of organisational practice. We agree with you that these are important questions, but we believe we have got these areas of programme more or less right. Before we admit to membership a grouping with a strongly held oppositional programme on these questions, we want to know what that programme is. The Nelson-Williams document certainly gives some hints as to your conception of democratic centralism, but it is unclear on a number of the key questions raised in the dispute in the BAPT and is inadequate as an outline of what you stand for. What are the political objectives of your group? What would be the political basis of the internal tendency you would establish on admission? What changes do you want in the IBT?

It might be that, besides the Nelson-Williams document, you stand also on certain other documents, and you could usefully indicate if that is the case, thereby helping us move towards a better understanding of your position. Do you stand by the recent letters of comrades Oren and Leisler? Do you stand by the earlier letters of comrade Clarke? To what extent do you stand by the writing of comrade Riker, who you inform us (in the meeting in the Bay Area on Tuesday 29 December) is an emeritus member of your group? What is your group's attitude towards your emeritus member's threats to publish a selection of our internal documents?

As far as we can understand from the Nelson-Williams document your programme for reform of the IBT would:

- i prohibit private political correspondence between a junior comrade in one locale and a senior comrade in another locale;
- ii prohibit the individual members of a leading body from making decisions on its behalf (subject to its review);
- iii prohibit the organisation as a whole from limiting the scale of a local publishing venture; and
- iv make it obligatory to supply the treasurer of any branch with the financial records of the other branches.

Does that summarise it fairly?

Or are there other changes you want? It is perfectly proper for you to want to make changes, but it is also proper for us to establish what changes you want before you join. We inevitably speculate that you are concerned also with matters as diverse as changing the character and target of the organisation's publications, organising our small forces in North America into two separate national sections, making considerable changes in the personnel of leadership bodies, and significantly reducing membership payments under the pledge schedule. Various of your individual members have expressed deeply felt differences about each of these matters in the past. Of course no one of these differences in isolation would have huge significance in considering membership, and each is subject to negotiation, and to decision by appropriate bodies in the organisation. But taken together with other positions, differences on questions such as these might well show a political pattern which should appropriately be met with considerable struggle, either internally or externally.

At this stage your expressed views do not seem to us inconsistent with the possibility of a de facto denial of the subordination of lower bodies in the organisation to higher bodies, or of the subordination of the minority to the majority. We are not making that as any kind of allegation. Indeed our presumption is that you do not consciously hold such positions. But it is not unreasonable for us, particularly in the aftermath of the 1917 West dispute, to be sensitive to the possibility that the totality of your differences, when they are spelt out, will amount to that.

We would like you to explain what you mean by the following passage:

"We note however that an agreement on the norms of democratic-centralist functioning is not the same thing as an agreement on your implementation of it. An a priori condition that we agree with your interpretation or implementation of these norms can only be considered as a prerequisite that we must think as the leadership thinks."

A central "norm" of Leninist functioning is clearly expressed in the first sentence of the section on democratic-centralism in our document "For Trotskyism!":

A revolutionary organization must be strictly centralized with the leading bodies having full authority to direct the work of lower bodies and members.

Presumably you agree with this. Yet to our mind agreement to the "norm" entails agreement to its implementation. In our view the relationship of lower bodies, such as locals or branches, to higher bodies, such as a national or international leadership, means that in situations where the implementation of measures or their interpretation is contested the decision of the higher body is binding on all. Of course there are avenues of appeal open, up to and including the international conference, but in the interim the higher body's ruling must be implemented. Do you agree that this must be the case in a Leninist organization?

Perhaps there is some particular instance of disagreement on implementation of democratic-

centralism in our handling of the dispute over *1917 West* or other instances that you are concerned over. If so it would be appropriate for you to raise them so that we could discuss the question not only in the abstract but in the concrete as part of the process of exploring the prospect of forming a common organization.

There is another matter which might elucidate your conceptions of democratic centralism. At a meeting with a representative of the IBT in the Bay Area on Tuesday 29 December comrades Dan and James were present as part of your delegation and apparently as members of your group. At a meeting on the following day (Wednesday 30 December) between your group and two representatives of the IBT you noted that not all members of the delegation from the previous meeting would be applying for membership of the IBT, and in the event neither comrades Dan or James signed your letter of application. We find it anomalous if your group has members who do not feel bound to accept your agreed political perspectives.

In your letter of application you seek to avoid going too deeply into your views on the way a revolutionary organisation should work internally by saying that you do not wish to write a "political essay" on democratic centralism, while telling us that

Democratic centralism is a line question only in the sense that one formally agrees to abide by the rules of the organization, whether one agrees with them or not.

We have multiple disagreements with this sentence, but it suffices to note that if you really believed it you would have no basis for existence. Perhaps it is not so relevant whether (or how) democratic centralism is a "line" question. The point is that a common acceptance of certain organisational parameters is necessary to co-existence in an organisation, and to the organisation being able to carry any line whatever. Certain kinds of differences in understanding of democratic centralism within an organisation will lead to constant bickering, and eventually to complete political paralysis. As you know such differences existed in our organisation over the last year, and incurred great expense in time and money, and considerable cost to our capacity to project our programme.

In some exceptional cases it may be sensible for a time that comrades who have elements of agreement programmatically but serious differences on the organisational question should exist in separate (and hopefully productive) organisations rather than spend their time in embittered wrangling within a single but unproductive organisation. In that way, perhaps, a more real unity can be established at a later time.

We would certainly not insist as a condition for membership that people must agree with every detail of our interpretation of the norms of democratic centralism or the way in which we implement them. Many differences in this area are quite compatible with membership in a common organisation. It's often a question of the extent of any differences, of how important they are. Sometimes even some quite profound differences, with good will and through discussion, can be brought to the point where they can be accommodated. You must give us more information on which to judge.

Communist greetings
Bill Logan
for the IEC

Letter from Janine to Boyd—1/24/93

London

Dear Comrade,

I am coming back to San Francisco on the 30 January 1993 (next Saturday). Can I please come and stay with you and Cathy again for a short period of time?

My plans are to arrive SF 30 Jan about 5.00 pm. Then I will be travelling down to San Mateo on 2 February to sit exams on 3-4 February and then travelling back to San Francisco on the evening of the 4 February. I would like to stay a few days in San Francisco after that and attend a BABT meeting if my visit coincides. Then on Tuesday 9 Feb or Wednesday 10 Feb I will head back to New Zealand (this time depends on what the airline can offer me!) So I will be in SF for about 10 days in all. If staying with you both is OK, can you send a note to me here in London? Thanks.

CG's Janine

Report of Physical Attack on Boyd by Smith—2/2/93

NOTE: This is a slightly revised version of a draft given to [redacted] and Smith on January 31. All revisions are in [] brackets and most are additions. Most changes are editorial and those of substance do not change the essentials.

Dear Comrades,

The following incident happened [Saturday, January 30th] at our Oakland office:

Boyd had arrived early for the local meeting and was in the middle of sorting out miscellaneous papers that had accumulated in the office when Smith arrived.

As soon as he entered I engaged him in a discussion that we had begun the night before by telephone about where Janine would stay. I told him that he had not been carrying his load in regard to people staying at his place and that it was his turn to have a visiting comrade stay with him. He almost immediately became extremely agitated and began yelling at me. He was so out of control that he picked up the table (actually an old door which we have laying on top of a smaller table) and threw it to one side so that it partly fell on the floor. My coffee went flying as did all the papers on the table.

He swore at me and approached me with fists clenched and got right up in my face. I immediately left the room and began walking down the hallway. I had not gotten more than a few paces down the hallway when he came after me.

He continued to yell with fists clenched down at his side as if to really take a swing at me. I can't remember for sure if he touched me at this point but his extremely aggressive posture forced me up against the wall. He was inches from my face, yelling and swearing that he would "knock my fucking head off" if I didn't say certain things he wanted me to say.

I was extremely frightened and cringing with my hands up near my face to protect myself. I, of course, repeated exactly what he wanted me to say. This incident lasted only a few horrifying seconds. He convinced me that he would in fact hit me more than once if I did not say what he wanted me to say.

He went back into the office and I immediately left the building by the stairs. I was too afraid to wait for the elevator.

I went outside and waited right by the front door for a few minutes to meet Henry. I had decided that I was not going to stay for a local meeting and wanted to inform Henry of [my decision and]

Smith's behavior.

I was not out in front of the building for more than a few minutes before Henry came walking around the corner. As luck would have it Smith had decided to come down stairs just as Henry arrived.

I told Smith that I wanted to talk to Henry alone and that I wasn't staying for a meeting. He, of course, refused to let this happen. I began walking toward Henry and away from Smith stating my desire to talk to Henry alone.

As he is both prone to do and excellent at doing, Smith just began to dominate the conversation. He began discussing the incident and the issue which precipitated it with Henry. Both Henry and I said we did not want to conduct business on the street.

I tried to walk down 14th St. with Henry to separate us from Smith but Smith followed relentlessly, talking in a very agitated fashion the whole time. He refused to disengage.

The three of us ended up talking at the corner of 14th and Franklin right near the Indian Restaurant. Smith would not listen to the pleas of Henry and myself to stop. Smith dominated the situation by nearly forcing Henry to listen to him. Smith repeated his physical threats to me in the presence of Henry and at one point put his right hand with an extended index finger only inches from my face.

At **that** moment I decided I would no longer be bullied by Smith and resolved that if he was going to hit me I would hit **back**. I involved myself in the discussion at the corner to try to extricate Henry. I also did repeat a comment or two about Smith not "carrying his load" in regard to visitors. [My comments about his refusing to allow Janine to stay at his **place** appeared to be what angered him most, as was also clear by the statements he forced me to admit up in the hallway outside our office door.]

[These few comments] angered him so much that he started after me again. He moved toward me with clenched fists and stated that he was going to physically harm me. I do not remember the exact words [but they were unmistakable physical threats]. I backed off and both Henry and I yelled at Smith to "stop it, stop it." I put the palm of my left hand up with outstretched arm to keep him at bay [and moved backwards away from him]. Henry was yelling at Smith to "stop it, stop it" but Smith kept pursuing me. I was clearly on the defensive and trying to avoid an altercation.

From the corner I backed up all the way the locksmith shop [minor correction, it was the Korean deli but the distance is actually the same. I had underestimated the actual distance from the corner to the locksmith shop.] which some PRGers will know is a distance of at least ten paces (20 to 30 feet). Smith would not stop, in fact, quickened his pace. It was like the "bums rush" the SL gave us in 1986. In a matter of split seconds I had to make a decision. I was convinced that I needed to defend myself and swung at him with my right fist. I connected with his face. This was enough to stop him momentarily.

He remarked: "Henry, he hit me, he hit me!" Then he said something like: Now, I gotta kick his ass or something that indicated he was going physically harm me. Henry and I both repeatedly pleaded with him to stop his aggression. I was standing a distance of 10 or more feet away. [I believe I even indicated to Smith that I was acting in self-defense and that I did not want to fight].

Within seconds he was at me again. I backed out into 14th Street and hit Smith again as he pursued me. I tried to runaway but Smith pursued me, grabbed me and threw me down [on the sidewalk]. By this time we were up by the bus stop bench back near the corner again. When I was down on the ground he jumped on me and began shaking me and I suppose hitting me but this part is a blur. I do remember that he successfully knocked my head against the brick building twice.

Henry was frantically trying to stop the fight. He was yelling: "Gerald stop it, stop it, the police might come by." Within a few minutes I somehow ended up on top of Smith on the ground. Gerald was yelling to Henry "Henry get your hands off me." Henry and I were yelling to Gerald to "stop it, stop it."

Smith relented. We extricated ourselves from each other and got up off the ground. I immediately got a good distance away from Smith.

The three of us began looking for our glasses. I found Smith's in apparent good condition and handed them to him. He and Henry looked for mine while I took a walk down the block for about 5 minutes to let Smith calm down. I was extremely upset at having been attacked by a comrade and was quite distraught. When I came back Smith and Henry were still looking for my glasses. I finally found them on myself in my jacket. They were completely mangled beyond repair.

[Just as we had disengaged and were both shaking ourselves off and trying to regain our composure a young black guy came up to us and said "Hey, why are you guys fighting?" I thanked the guy for asking but told him he couldn't really help and that we had stopped now. But it was a good fucking question and one that really choked me up. Here were two long time collaborators in the struggle for world revolution mauling each other on the ground and endangering a third comrade (as Henry pointed out a cop could have come along and blown him and Smith away and left me standing). Since then I have thought maybe I should have told the guy that this was how we implement our strategy for integrated class struggle.]

The three of us walked back toward the entrance on Franklin St. Smith wanted me to join him and Henry in the local meeting. [Smith told me I should come up to the office and begin the local meeting. I told him I was not going to that I could not do it. I was also very sure that Smith was still not in control of himself and feared for my safety. He blubbered something about me "not being man enough" (Smith often invokes some Neanderthal notion of manhood and did so again later in the day to me on the phone) to come to the meeting. He also said I had to explain to him why I hit him. I told him that I only acted in self-defense and these words I remember exactly: "Gerald you know I would never hit you except in self-defense. I do not want to fight with you." I was too distraught to participate and walked off to my car and went home.

I am most embarrassed and humiliated as having let Smith successfully make me a victim of his much lauded ["in your face" New York culture.] I suppose I should not have stayed to talk knowing the agitated state Smith was in. This was my mistake, [(one that I have paid a physical price for I might add)] perhaps one that might merit some disciplinary measures, I don't know. I'm not completely convinced, however, that this onus should be placed on me or any comrade. It seems to me that the comrade who is incapable of controlling his physical responses is the one who has the obligation to depart. Otherwise, goons like Gerald will clear a room every time

they begin their violent temper tantrums. They are the ones who should leave not those of us who are able to carry on a discussion.

I have spent the last more than 24 hours [at this revision it has been more than 48 hours] pondering this incident and its many complex aspects. Smith's anger both at the organization and at me personally comes from many different sources. He told me by phone [on the day of the attack] that "If I'd show more respect to people then I won't get hit up side the head." [A "lack of respect and badgering" are the only reasons Smith has given me for his assault—not that I said something racist or even called him a thief or snitch or spy, or silly or stupid or clone]. As my parents often counseled, however, [reasons for people's actions are often much deeper than the stated ones.] The reason for Smith's anger and his striking out at me was not because I badgered him or showed a lack of respect. The reasons are much deeper and complex.

Smith is in an organization that does not have his politics. He is conflicted at how to resolve this contradiction. He is unable to resolve it for himself. He's stays in the organization out of habit as well as because we have a large part of his program. Much of his emerging program is undeveloped so he doesn't see clearly the reason to leave the IBT. He is beginning to act out an individual autonomy as a subset of the "national and local autonomy" that he and Riker have long argued for. I interface the most with him and have the most arguments with him on a weekly basis and it is too some extent logical that I am the target of his rage.

I did not immediately rush to print or the phone because I wanted to regain my composure. I had a good talk with Henry later in the day and he will be filing a report also which I understand will substantiate my version of events in all important aspects.

As I hope comrades will understand I would find it impossible to put myself in the same room with Smith again for quite awhile without knowing that there was absolute assurance of my physical safety. I believe he may still harbor very strong feelings against me and am now [know] that he his able to physically harm a comrade.

[It has distressed me greatly that a comrade who I have had such a long (though difficult) collaboration with should be able to assault me with intent to harm. And over what? Later in the day as reported above he even justified his assault on me which only leads me to think it could very well happen again.]

[I leave this incident for judicious action of the IEC.]

Comradely Greetings,
Boyd

Letter from Riley to BABT—2/2/93

Dear BABT comrades.

We are very disturbed to read drew's report on recent events in babt. we consider it absolutely urgent that both gerald and henry supply us immediately with full and complete accounts of what transpired, or at least indicate what if any differences they have with the account boyd has provided. this would appear to be a very serious matter and nothing should be seen as a higher priority

(signed) tom, for the is cc.IEC

Letter from Trent to BT/IEC—2/3/93

Dear Comrades:

This report is filed later than I had intended. After nineteen years on the same job I became unemployed in December due to a plant closure and am now in an extremely intensive retraining program which keeps me in class six and one-half hours per day Monday through Friday. I also must spend more than two hours commuting to and from class. As a result my writing time has been limited.

I found Boyd's account of what happened out on the street to be generally in accordance with what I witnessed. The meeting was scheduled for 11:00 A.M., and it was about 10:55 A.M. when I approached the building where we have our office. I was walking along 14th Street and had just turned the corner onto Franklin Street when I saw Boyd at the front door of the building calling out that he wanted to talk to me. As we approached each other it was obvious that he was upset about something.

A few seconds later Smith exited the building and came toward us in what I would have to call a cold fury. Boyd said something to the effect of "Get back! I want to talk with Henry alone." Smith continued to approach and began berating Boyd for not wanting to talk about the situation in his presence.

I must confess that the events happened so quickly and were such a shock to me that there are some details which I do not recall with complete clarity. When I arrived for a meeting that morning, the last thing I had expected was to see two long-time comrades and collaborators fighting. I do recall that while we were on the corner of 14th and Franklin Boyd said to Smith that he would not let Smith intimidate him anymore. As Smith followed Boyd onto 14th Street, at one point I had my hands on Smith's shoulders and told I did not know what was wrong with him. There was another exchange at which point Smith moved toward Boyd quickly and in a threatening posture.

At this point Boyd took a swing at Smith. At most it was a glancing blow which did not hurt Smith, but at this point Smith said to me that Boyd had hit him and now he "would have to kick his ass." Smith then moved to the attack and the fight was on. The fight began either in the street or on the edge of the sidewalk on 14th Street, but at one point the combatants were on the other side of the sidewalk against the building. I saw Boyd's head hit the wall. (I do not know how many times.) All this time I was doing what I could to break up the fight by imploring Smith to stop and by trying to break his grip on Boyd.

When the altercation stopped, things happened exactly the way Boyd said they did. Boyd found Smith's glasses and gave them to him, and Smith and I spent several minutes combing almost every inch of the immediate area trying to find Boyd's glasses. The young black man did indeed come up and ask why we were fighting. We told him things were under control, but I seem to recall that he offered Boyd and me a rock to use.

After Boyd found his glasses, badly damaged, in his pocket, he said he would not be able to have a meeting. The three of us spent several minutes more out on the street with Smith trying to conduct a discussion of the dispute and cajoling Boyd to come upstairs for the meeting. After it became clear that Boyd would not be staying for a meeting, Smith and I started to go upstairs to the office. As Boyd left to go to his car, which was parked in the parking lot beside the building on Franklin Street, I asked him if he had made provision for picking up Janine at the airport. He did not hear me and I had to run after him to repeat the question. As I did this I heard Smith make a sarcastic comment about "running after his master."

Smith and I continued our conversation about this incident and the events leading up to it, but I shall let Smith speak for himself on this matter. I will say, though, that he basically defended his actions, saying Boyd could have prevented this by shutting up. He indicated several problems he had with Boyd's functioning and attitude toward him, but these matters could have easily been addressed and discussed in normal meetings. Smith seems to have felt questions of "manhood" were involved, and he said he did not hit Boyd even though he could have and did not try to hurt him. (My knees are still sore from hitting the sidewalk while trying to break things up.) The only time I heard Smith express any regret about anything was when Boyd's companion Zimmerman called and had a conversation with me about the incident but refused to speak with him.

The office was a mess, and I thought at first there had been a fight. The door that we put on top of the table to create a larger table, had been pushed off to a severe angle, and coffee-stained papers had been strewn about. Boyd's coffee cup lay broken in pieces near the door of the office across the hallway from our office.

These are my observations and opinions. Even though Boyd threw the first punch in this altercation, Smith was clearly the aggressor. The punch was thrown after Smith had approached in what can only be called a threatening manner. The altercation started in our office on the third floor at the end of the hallway, but Smith followed Boyd down to the end of the hallway, to the ground floor, out the door onto Franklin Street and around the corner onto 14th Street. Smith could have stopped the confrontation at anytime by simply not pursuing Boyd. During this time I never heard him say anything that would have indicated he was trying to resolve this issue short of a fight. The only thing even approaching an attempt at resolving the problem was his insistence that Boyd speak with me in his presence. He seems to have the idea that Boyd was going to line me up against him without my having heard his side of the story.

Boyd, on the other hand, was clearly on the defensive from what I saw. He never approached Smith, and was in a constant retreat mode, having retreated from the office, through the lobby, out onto Franklin Street and onto 14th Street. He made several statements indicating he did not seek a physical confrontation. When it was over he said once again he did not want to fight. I did not hear Smith say that.

I must also say this could have been a real disaster for the BABT. 14th and Franklin is only a block from 14th and Broadway, the main intersection in Oakland and an area that is normally heavily patrolled by the police. Members of OROs, including the SL sometimes come through the area.

This use of violence has cast a pall over the BABT. I had always thought we were trying to build an organization in which comrades could feel safe with each other regardless of any differences in opinions, backgrounds or temperaments and personal differences would be resolved in a comradely manner. It was only a few months ago that Riker made a statement about blowing Boyd's head off. This machismo approach is clearly unacceptable.

Comradely,
Trent

Report of Physical Attack by Boyd on Smith

Dear Comrades,

Before I tell you what happened, here are some key facts "left out" of Boyd's letter.

A week before that Saturday's meeting, which would have been the 31st, we got a Compuserve message that Janine was coming to town. Drew, of course, waited until probably Wednesday or so and starts calling to find her someplace to stay.

He called me and I told him that she couldn't stay here. That was the first time. So, then he calls back the next day and says, "well, you're going to take your share of the visitors." And I said, "Unfortunately, my nephew, Donte, is staying down in the room that Janine stayed in when she last visited and where Logan stayed. Really, there's not an empty bed in the house. She can't stay here." That's just factual. But then he called the next day. So this is Friday, this is the third time he called. He says, "You gotta let Janine stay"—same thing basically.

So I say, "Listen Drew, I don't think you understand what's happening. There's no place for her to stay." And I'm getting a little angry now. "She can sleep on the fucking floor. That's the only place she can sleep."

Then he calls again! And he says "What about that room Little Gerald stayed in?" because last time he had been here I guess, Little Gerald had been staying in this room. But the room is full of junk, boxes are stacked nearly to the ceiling. I told him: "I tell you what, why don't you come on over here, if it will make you feel better and look for yourself and you'll see that there really is no place for her to sleep. Earlene really doesn't want visitors sleeping on the couch. She can sleep on the floor, as I told you". So then, he calls again and says, "She's got to stay with you."

Given the simple fact that the jerk didn't even bother to come to my home to investigate and see for himself that there actually was no bed for the woman to sleep in I, once again, told him no and that's that. You'd think by now he'd understand he was barking up the wrong tree.

Now, of course, I know that the Kathy Z. has told him that Janine couldn't stay over there. You would think Boyd would be honest enough to explain his situation. If he had been forthright with me, with a touch of humility, I would have provided him with some alternative avenues to explore. No such luck.

This is not too different from when Logan was here. Kathy put Logan out because her family was coming. Drew kept calling Jackie over and over again saying she should let Logan stay there. Finally Jackie got mad and hung up on him.

Same thing. "That's out," I told him in front of Henry, "Look, unwanted phone calls are a form of harassment. No means no. It's understandable if you think its wrong if I don't want to let someone in my house, but you don't continually badger people after you've told you no. If you are serious about such matters you bring them to the branch meeting. Otherwise shut the fuck up or use your ene in a more productive manner. Ask someone in our periphery" (Oops!). Excluding our resent applicants there was one possibility that Vince, Chris K., or Mike A. might have put her up.

We're not obliged to take people into our homes, that is a voluntary thing we do as part of our tradition as internationalists, and try to ease the load for the organization. But it doesn't mean it is a condition of membership or some part of "democratic centralism" to let anyone from anywhere in the world come into our house any time they want.

So, he calls me again Saturday morning and then I really was angered. I told him: "Listen, she ain't staying here! You understand? That's it. I'll talk to you when we get to the motherfuckin' office."

So I shoot on downtown. I run up to the office and the very first thing out of Drew's mouth is "You're not taking your share of visitors."

I told Drew, "Don't tell me no motherfuckin' bullshit about nobody's fuckin' share. Nobody in this fuckin' local has put up as many people as I have in my house—nobody. Don't give me that bullshit. I put up Logan, Janine, Martin, Marcus and people I have completely forgot by now."

It's important to realize, that Drew never mentions in his report that he never asked Henry for anyone to stay over at Henry's house. Not because he can't ask Henry, or necessarily Henry shouldn't let anyone stay over there. But his strategy is to not ask Henry so he can keep Henry as a block partner. It's unprincipled. It's part of his Weasel-In-Training functioning.

Here's how Boyd recounts this portion of our discussion:

"He was inches from my face, yelling and swearing that he would 'knock my fucking head off' if I didn't say certain things he wanted me to say.

"I was extremely frightened and cringing with my hands up near my face to protect myself. I, of course, repeated exactly what he wanted me to say. This incident lasted only a few horrifying seconds. He convinced me that he would in fact hit me more than once if I did not say what he wanted me to say."

He's no much of a communist, but maybe he has a future in pulp novels.

Here's what actually happened.

I jumped up from my chair and said, "Tell me this, goddamit, did you ask Henry?" and he whined something. And I said, "Motherfucker, did you ask Henry?" And he said "no".

And I said, "Yeah, I know you didn't, you motherfuckin' weasel." And then I broke down to him why he did it, "Now that's bullshit, it's okay if Henry can't do it, but you have a responsibility to at least ask Henry. By the way, you should have started the day we got that letter, you could have asked Chris or Mike, or anyone—we don't need to be fucking with shit like this. What the fuck is wrong with you?" So, he says something smart and he ran out the office and I'm left sitting in the office.

And so then, I'm in the room, he's in the hallway and he's kind running back and forth, making little comments. And I say to him, "You silly bitch!", and I jump up, run out there, catch him in the hallway. And I made him admit that I'd put plenty of people up in my house—Martin, Logan, Janine, etc., etc.

He says that he immediately left the room, the office and began walking down the hallway. And then, I quote, "I had not got more than a few paces down the hallway when he came after me." That's not true at all. What happened was, I was sitting down in the office and Boyd continually would walk out of the office, come back in the door, and say something, then walk down the hall a little bit, then come back say something else. And that was what was happening. He drew me to go and pay him a visit in the hallway. I was sitting down. But he just kept coming back, yak-yak-yak-yak. Crazy, man. The motherfucker's sick, but that's what happened. And I told him again, I didn't want no goddamned spies in my house.

And the way the tabletop got pulled around was totally accidental. When Drew ran out of the office the first time, I ran around the desk and he ran around and I grabbed the tabletop to gain momentum in an effort to catch hold of him and the tabletop flipped over. Totally an accident. And then he ran on down the stairs.

Now I thought, watch this, he's going to stay down there, and try to talk to Henry off on the side, because he doesn't want to confront him in front of me.

So I let him stay there about five minutes and I run on down there and I caught Henry coming right in the door and there's Drew, he's trying to get Henry to go over the side. And I say, "What is it you got to say to Henry that you can't say in front of me?" He says, "I don't want to talk to you." I said, "Listen, goddamit, we're having a meeting upstairs."

As we argued Boyd kept backing away from me. So I chase him down the street now. So then, I'm up on him now, I'm yelling at him again "you're a fucking weasel, why do you want to talk behind people's back, why can't you deal honestly. The IS can't help you with shit like this, you've got to speak for yourself!" So, then he hit me. I said "you hit me—now I going to kick your ass." He was running almost halfway in the middle of the street and so he backs up some more then he took a second swing at me and hit me again. And I said to Henry, "Henry, you see that, he hit me."

Then I just grabbed the little weasel and threw him down. I hopped on him, but I did not punch him. And I did not bang his head up against the wall. We were tussling over there by the wall and that's how he bumped his head I think.

Henry was yelling all this time for us to stop. When I got him down and we were tussling, Henry tried to separate us. He grabbed Drew and tried to separate us.

Afterward Drew ran down the street and called the office and wanted to talk to Henry. I picked up the phone and said: "come on in the meeting goddamit". And he whined that he was afraid. And I said, "goddamit, straighten up, come on down to the goddamned meeting!"

I think the boy had a kind of nervous breakdown. Because he was talking shit one minute, running away the next. It was a little strange. For instance, at one point Boyd said, during one of the many phone calls, "Well Gerald, you can dish it out but you can't take it." I have no idea what he was referring to.

He called the office no less than five times, to see if I was still there. He said he was scared to come up to the office if I was there. And then Kathy Z. calls and she says that she was the one that said that they can't have guests right now.

Boyd claimed in his letter that he was afraid to be in the same room with me. Now that's total bullshit. If Boyd was so scared of me why is it that the very next night, Monday February 2, we attended a meeting together at the Copwatch office on the Gerald Hall case? Drew did not act frightened there and we collaborated as normally. Very cordial. We both also attended and collaborated at the Committee for Justice for Jerrold Hall and John Henry Owens meeting Monday February 8.

Drew's report was one sided. The whole title "The physical attack by Smith on Boyd" is bullshit. I didn't attack him. He swung on me. I yelled at him. No big deal about yelling at people in politics. This is crazy. Drew is very deceitful. Because he does not give any hint that he had provoked the situation by repeatedly over and over badgering me with the question about where Janine was going to be staying. So he just says that, as soon as he entered, I engaged him in the discussion we had had the night before. It wasn't just the night before, it started Wed-

nesday, the same call, over and over. And the point is, no means no. I told him no Wednesday. That should have been enough. If he couldn't find someone else to do it, if his wife wouldn't let him do it, then you've got to look at the possibility of getting some of the \$3,000 that the Wiz took out the treasury and using that to put up their spy.

On the question of people carrying their load. People visiting from out of town are very often graciously accepted in households of our membership. But this is a voluntary tradition, not a requirement for membership. When you sign the dotted line and join this group, nowhere is it understood that you necessarily have to allow anyone to stay in your house against your will. That is not democratic centralism.

Now Drew continuously argues that I was out of control, that I was threatening his existence. Well, if I was totally out of control, why didn't I just maddog him in the office, if I was totally out of control and full of hate and anger? But actually we were just arguing. I was certainly raising my voice. But this is in the poor fellow's mind, this out of control stuff.

And here this is interesting, I have to quote it. Drew says "Smith dominated the situation by nearly forcing Henry to listen to him." Henry was standing right there, Henry was listening. So was Boyd. So what the fuck is he talking about Henry listening to him. I don't know where the guy is coming from. I think he's in some kind of psychological trouble here. Because either someone is listening, or they're not.

And another thing, about clenched fists at people's sides. This may induce unnecessary paranoia in people who feel they've been doing something and they deserve to be knocked upside the head. But normal people know that as long as people's hands are by their sides, and there isn't anything but words going back and forth, there's nothing to worry about. What's wrong with this boy? I don't understand this.

In his letter he says, "It seems to me that the comrade is incapable of controlling his physical responses then he should have the obligation to depart." I never swung at Drew, so obviously I was controlling my shit. He's the one that panicked and swung at me. That's what he says happened. What the fuck is he talking about? I'm a goon, he says. The boy is sick.

Later he says, "Smith's anger both at the organization and at me personally comes from many different sources." I am so happy that we have a man in our ranks who has the depth of vision to understand my every motivation and thought. Really.

But the question is, where did he learn these "skills"? Well, I'll tell you, look at all those love letters that came from Riley and Logan. That'll give you a starter. And where did they get it from? We know where they got it from. Mr. Jimbo Robertson. Fuck that sorry bullshit. Now he's going to go from an IQ of 85 to reading minds. No can do, Boyd. Sorry chap I can't get into that.

Later he says, "Smith is in an organization that does not have his politics. He is conflicted at how to resolve this contradiction. He is unable to resolve it for himself. He stays in the organization out of habit as well as because we have a large part of his program. Much of his emerging program is undeveloped so he doesn't see clearly the reason to leave the IBT. He is beginning to act out an individual autonomy as a subset of the 'national and local autonomy' that he and Riker have long argued for. I interface the most with him and have the most arguments with him on a weekly basis and it is to some extent logical that I am the target of his rage." First of all this fucking ninkimpoop has got some nerve talking about who understands the program and who doesn't. I have considered myself a Trotskyist now since 1972. I think I'm highly competent in what I'm trying to do. Now I may not have the resources and personnel to do the things I like to see done, but this is what is really going on.

This sorry motherfucker has not made a single contact for the BABT in months, not one. He doesn't do very many assignments save "building the international" through a rather humorous correspondence, i.e. telling those on the other end what he thinks they want to hear. We have had only three meetings since Logan left. Three Local meetings! He was for weekly meetings when Logan was here, but Logan isn't here now. And he hasn't been doing any consistent public work, "so what the fuck, why have a meeting".

Boyd states in his letter on this incident that I'm in an organization that doesn't have my politics. Well, it may be a true that a part of this organization doesn't have my politics, but we have yet to know what politics those are and exactly who has them.

Where does he get this shit from? We know. Look at this bullshit that Riley wrote that I agree with Socialist Action, that I want to join Socialist Action. I never said that. I said that Socialist Action lost their right wing and therefore they were vulnerable. They had to be having a little left bulge right now. So Tom translates that into, "oh, Gerald's tired of Trotskyism and wants to join Socialist Action." Little did Tom know that both Boyd and Riker were present during that portion of our conversation. I won't be holding my breath until Boyd verifies this. In a degenerating organization simple truth is often the first casualty.

Boyd gets this line and this stupidity from the so-called leaders and tries to ape their methods and dishonesty and wishful thinking in this kind of sorry shit. It's really sad. And this they call cadre training. It's worthy to note that the fool talks about not wanting to be in the same room with Smith again, but the Monday after this thing, we're in the same room obviously because we had business to take care of. I was there about an hour and half. He came late, so he probably was there about an hour. If he's so "terrified" why didn't run out of the room when I

came toward him? It was no problem whatsoever. Now, he wants absolute assurance of his physical safety. That's real easy, conduct organizational matters in a businesslike manner, don't provoke me, and don't hit me. And you'll be safe.

It simple, if they hit you, you defend yourself, you acquaint them with the pavement. It's easy. I can't imagine how he can say he wants to be assured of his safety. He's paranoid, because he's a little political chump, a little lackey, a sycophant, a yes man. He knows it. That's it.

I don't think Boyd should be suspended. I'm not that way. I'm not into whining. The truth of the matter is that he didn't hurt me. When he hit me the second time, as he admits in his letter, I just grabbed him by the collar and threw him up against the concrete and then Henry separated us.

All for now,
I await your instructions,
Smith, 2/9/93

Letter from Working Committee to IBT/IEC—2/8/93

Dear Comrades,

We have received your letter of January 19.

We have been referring to ourselves internally as "the Working Committee."

Our tendency and its supporters comprise most of your closest periphery in North America. You have known all of us for years. Only a short time ago, you were actively encouraging several of us to join or rejoin your organization. It is simply not true that you do not know us politically, as you suggest in your letter.

We regret your decision not to accept our January 1 application for membership in your organization, but we are not altogether surprised by it.

We accept your counterproposal for organization-to-organization discussions to explore the possibility of a principled fusion. You will understand that we are anxious to expeditiously determine our organizational relationship to you, since it unavoidably preconditions all our other tasks and perspectives.

We have previously blocked with you on external work in both the Bay Area and Toronto, and are willing to continue to do so during the interim period.

You wish to put our relations on an organization-to-organization basis. This would have the following consequences for joint external work:

a) Neither group will publicly criticize the other. Differences between the two groups will be discussed only with members or supporters of either group. During joint work, members of the two groups will not argue on the differences between the two groups.

b) Joint work should be coordinated on an organization-to-organization basis. Members of one group are not subject to the discipline of the other.

c) If anyone asks, we are two groups doing joint work. We have differences and are in the process of discussing them.

You assert that our tendency must have *programmatic* differences with your organization, "in the broad sense that the programme of a group is everything that the group does and stands for." We repeat that we consider ourselves in formal programmatic agreement with your organization. We are furthermore prepared, within the historical parameters of democratic centralism, to accept the discipline of a fused organization. As stated in our January 1 letter, we certainly do have differences, but at this time we do not consider them to be *programmatic* in nature.

"Bureaucratism is *ultimately* counterposed to the revolutionary program and must eventually express itself politically. But formal programmatic departures need not necessarily *precede* bureaucratic degeneration..."

"We projected a course of work to generate a political struggle within the iSt to restore the organization to revolutionary health, and held open the possibility that the group — or at least a portion of it — would be salvageable."

—ET Bulletin No. 4, p. 10

You write that we "presumably believe [our differences] are insufficient to be an obstacle to unity." We believe rather that the basis for unity we have proposed *should be* adequate for a healthy organization. You indicate, however, that it is not adequate for you. You apparently wish to add other conditions.

We speculate that the additional conditions you would wish to impose might include some form of ideological requirements that are not part of the ordinary conditions of discipline in a democratic centralist organization. We would consider it unprincipled to submit to such requirements.

We speculate that the additional conditions you would wish to impose might include some form of ideological requirements that are not part of the ordinary conditions of discipline in a democratic centralist organization. We would consider it unprincipled to submit to such requirements.

We further speculate that you might wish to impose some form of requirement of unconditional obedience. We would consider it unprincipled for us to swear absolute obedience or for you to ask us to. Absolute subordination is an attribute of despotism, not of democratic centralism. In contrast, a democratic centralist faced with an objectionable majority decision or instruction from a leading body must *either* follow it or decide that it represents a potential split issue, and be prepared to accept the consequences.

You ask about the political motives of our tendency. We seek the realization of the Trotskyist program, which in recent years has been best presented in the pages of *1917*. We stand on the External Tendency's thesis that the organization question is a political question, which we wonder if the IBT has forgotten. We object to the IBT's recent internal tendency toward self-glorification and pomposity, and reflect that in present historical circumstances, to be the "best" is not a great accomplishment but a rather modest one. We are troubled by the fact that the PRG acts as a near-monolithic bloc in IBT internal discussions. We are gravely concerned by the IS/IEC's handling of the 1917 West affair, both internally and in relation to the organizational periphery in North America.

You condescendingly assert that we "seek to avoid going too deeply into [our] views on the way a revolutionary organization should work internally by saying that [we] do not wish to write a political essay on democratic centralism." What we said in our January 1 letter was "To ask comrades to write a political essay on democratic centralism seems to us to be quite inappropriate." We stand by that. We did not say that we did not wish to write (we are happy to write), but that it would be inappropriate for you to demand that we pass some additional test when we had already stated our programmatic agreement and offered to abide by the discipline of the organization. (You want... More than that? An additional stipulation that you can interpret ad hoc in the future?)

You propose an organization-to-organization discussion in writing. Very well, we accept for the time being. Let us conduct it seriously.

We agree with your statement that "a common acceptance of certain organizational parameters is necessary to co-existence in an organization, and to the organization being able to carry out any line whatever." You continue, "Certain kinds of differences in understanding of democratic centralism within an organization will lead to constant bickering, and eventually to complete paralysis." We can imagine circumstances in which this might be true, although your use of the word "bickering" suggests a derisive attitude toward the differences in question, and we suspect that you may define the word "bickering" rather more broadly than we would. But then you go on, "As you know such differences existed in our organization over the last year, and incurred great expense in time and money, and considerable cost to our capacity to project our programme." We know no such thing. The last year was a terrible destructive waste, but our best assessment is that the responsibility for this lies overwhelmingly with the international leadership, and not at all with the mere existence of "differences" in your organization.

As implied in our January 1 letter, we have endorsed Nelson and Williams' document "Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency." In doing so, we noted —

"...the Logan/Riley methodology is now in the process of becoming the political/organizational practice of the IBT. If this is allowed to stand, there will be little left of healthy democratic centralism in the IBT. The overriding causes of the present internal difficulties are the isolation of the organization from the class struggle and the demoralization that inevitably results from isolation."

We have found the IBT's response to the Nelson/Williams document anything but reassuring. "The 'Holier than Thou' Brigade Comes to the Rescue" seems to us to be of a piece with the Spartacist League's anti-ET literature. This is apparently just fine with the IBT leadership, although you complain that our letter of January 1 had an "abrasive tone"!

You inquire as to our positions regarding various other documents and letters. In general, our position is that over time our tendency will generate its own documents. (You will not quarrel, we trust, with our observation that it takes time to produce good political literature.) With respect to the *1917 West* affair, we believe it most useful to examine the documentary record and the facts as we know them in their entirety. We find it appropriate neither to endorse nor to apologize for statements made during the recent controversy by persons not under our discipline at the time. As a tendency we reject all personalism, whether of the majority or of the minority.

At meetings on December 27, 1992, and January 2, 1993, we adopted the following 19 resolutions on the *1917 West* affair:

Resolutions on the 1917 West Affair

1. While the first issue of *1917 West* could be characterized as ambitious and its cost of \$830 (all but \$150 of which was raised outside the organization) was arguably too high, to represent this as some sort of crime ("misappropriation of funds") is ridiculous.
2. Under the 1990 conference resolution on funds, the IBT had the right to control any expenditure of funds by any of its organizational components. Prior to the *1917 West* affair, this provision had never been invoked. In the absence of organization-wide prioritizing and budgeting of the expenses of branches, the IS's intervention on this matter was at best ad hoc and leaves its impartiality in doubt.
3. The restrictions the IBT attempted to impose on the content of *1917 West* (items of local interest only) were unprecedented and inconsistent with the 1990 conference resolution on review of political statements and publications.
4. It had been the longstanding practice of the BABT to forward all intended publications for review prior to publication. The demand that copy for *1917 West* be forwarded for such review was redundant and somewhat peculiar.
5. The requirement of explicit prior approval of all articles intended for publication in *1917 West* was inconsistent with the 1990 conference resolution on review of political statements and publications. Most or all of the material did not fit the resolution's description of items requiring explicit approval.
6. Publication of *1917 West* was delayed for approximately six weeks, to allow for incorporation of editorial improvements from Wellington and Toronto.
7. During this time, few if any deficiencies of line and no major errors were identified in the copy for *1917 West*. Comrade Logan's objection to the reference to AIDS "victims" was not obviously correct. This type of micro-level criticism, while valuable in and of itself, is a luxury and not a necessity. Even with respect to *1917* proper, only a limited amount of such luxury has been historically deemed practicable.
8. The review of *1917 West* did not in itself place any inordinate, extraordinary, or even very significant demands on the time and resources of the IBT. The controversy over *1917 West* did consume an inordinate and extraordinary amount of the IBT's time and resources.
9. The January 15 IS "formal request" did not exist. It appears nowhere in the January 15 minutes of the IS, where such a directive would normally be found.
10. This "request" was first referred to in the February 12 IS minutes as an excerpt from a letter from Riley, dated January 28, complaining that the requested proposal had not been sent for approval. This was followed up by a second reference to the "request" for a written proposal in the March 6 IS minutes. Such procedures on the part of the IS, unchecked by any initiative on the part of the IEC, display a cavalier attitude towards its responsibilities as a leading body of the IBT.
11. It is misleading to represent the *1917 West* dispute as having been primarily a problem of personnel or discipline.
12. Differences on the implementation of democratic centralism do not constitute opposition to democratic centralism, nor do they constitute Menshevism. The use of such fallacious political identifications by the majority was designed to destroy the comrades' political authority and is disturbingly similar to the practice of the Spartacist tendency.
13. There was no "misappropriation" of funds by the BABT treasurer. The BABT followed the January 15 IS guidelines on raising funds outside the organization. The majority avers that its references to Riker's "misappropriation" of funds spent on the publication of *1917 West* were in no way intended to imply that he stole any money. However, when supporter Leisler questioned Comrade Logan as to whether the IBT's diversion of funds contributed for *1917 West* constituted a "misappropriation," Comrade Logan became outraged and said words to the effect of "What? Are you accusing us of stealing?" This gross inconsistency casts doubt on the sincerity of the majority's reassurances.
14. Comrade Dorn covertly submitted detailed political reports on the functioning of the BABT to the majority in the form of personal correspondence. BABT comrades were portrayed in a very negative light in these reports, but had no opportunity to respond, since the reports were submitted without their knowledge.
15. The BABT vote to require Comrade Dorn to turn over all such correspondence was technically incorrect because it was based on a provision of the old BT organizational rules and

guidelines, which were no longer operative. Comrade Dom's covert intelligence reports to her factional superiors (comrades Logan and Riley) were protected by the right of personal correspondence.

16. Under the 1990 conference resolution on funds, the IBT had the right to demand that the BABT treasury be turned over to the IBT. Such a demand was, however, completely unprecedented. In addition, the lack of formal organizational budgeting procedures makes such actions highly suspect.

17. The further restrictions placed on the BABT's functioning, including the requirement that tapes of all meetings be forwarded to Wellington and that advance permission be obtained from Toronto before any comrade attended any political event, reek of Cominternist intimidation and commandism. According to IS minutes #33, Oct. 16, 1992:

"...the BABT does not have the right to issue leaflets or any other written material which is not authorized in advance by the IS...does not have the right to participate in any political initiative without the supervision and approval of the IS...this would involve collaboration between a member of the IS and the O.C. organizer, or other designated comrade...it is necessary for such a comrade to consult in advance...with the IS about significant political interventions..."

18. According to motion #1, IS minutes #33, "Smith and Riker need to adjust to behaving like members of a Leninist organization (i.e. rigidly adhering to the instructions of the leading bodies of the IBT)." Under these circumstances, such a demand for absolute obedience is egregious and is intended to either break the will of the comrades or set them up for further punitive action.

19. According to motion #2, IS minutes #33, Smith must be suspended from the IEC because "he opposed a motion calling for abiding by democratic centralism (i.e., the decisions of the IS)." The fact that the IS cannot distinguish between a motion, which must be voted on, and an order, to be obeyed, displays a highly selective view of democratic centralism and leaves its sense of reality in doubt.

Approved by the
Working Committee
December 27, 1992,
and January 2, 1993.

The 1990 conference resolution referred to above in points 3 and 5 reads as follows:

"4) All major political statements, including drafts of all line articles for 1917 as well as letters to political opponents and leaflets on questions which we have not to date elaborated a position must be circulated to all IEC members for approval prior to publication.

"5) In the event of a significant political disagreement over political line within the organization it is the responsibility of the bureau to organize a written discussion in which the majority will prevail. Whenever possible we should attempt to postpone taking a public position on the disputed major political positions pending a plenum of the IEC, or delegated conference of the entire tendency."

—Tasks and Perspectives,
BT/PRG Joint Fusion
Conference, May 1990
(Internal Discussion Bulletin,
Vol. 7 No. 5, pp. 9-10),
emphasis added

This is the policy adopted at your most recent conference. It is essentially the same policy that Comrade Logan articulated a few months later in Berlin.

It is worth noting that these resolutions predate any discussion of "national sections," a subject that the 1990 Oakland conference did not address.

In a democratic centralist organization, conference resolutions such as this are binding on leading bodies. You wish to emphasize the subordination of lower bodies to higher bodies; the conference is the highest body of all. Could you explain to us how the actions of the IS/IEC in the 1917 West affair implemented these conference resolutions?

We ourselves have no special "conception of democratic centralism." We are quite satisfied with the historical one.

Perhaps the IBT leadership has such a special conception? We do note a rather one-sided emphasis in many of its declarations relating to the 1917 West controversy, as well as in your letter.

For instance, you write that “your expressed views do not seem to us inconsistent with the possibility of a de facto denial of the subordination of lower bodies to higher bodies, or of the subordination of the minority to the majority.”

While we appreciate the relative politeness of this statement, what we actually reject is the concept of unconditional “obedience” that the recent formulations of the IS/IEC seem to imply, not the subordination of lower bodies to higher bodies and of the minority to the majority. Unconditional obedience is something distinct from this. It might be appropriate in a military situation, but not as a condition of membership in a communist organization.

“The development of a rigid, authoritarian style of leadership in a communist organization reveals a fundamental lack of confidence in the membership and, ultimately, in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat.”

—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p. 8

Over and over again we have heard talk of obedience, but no mention of the corresponding duty of the leadership to the membership. The duty of a democratic centralist leadership to lead correctly is at least as important as the “duty” of the membership to follow. Writing to the German Left Opposition in 1931, Trotsky gave some indication of what the duty of a democratic centralist leadership entails:

“We must not forget that even if we are *centralists*, we are *democratic* centralists who employ centralism only for the revolutionary cause and not in the name of the ‘prestige’ of the officials. Whoever is acquainted with the history of the Bolshevik Party knows what a broad autonomy the local organizations always enjoyed; they issued their own papers, in which they openly and sharply, whenever they found it necessary, criticized the actions of the Central Committee. Had the Central Committee, in case of principled differences, attempted to disperse the local organizations or to deprive them of literature (their bread and water) before the party had had an opportunity to express itself —such a central committee would have made itself impossible. Naturally, as soon as it became necessary, the Bolshevik Central Committee could give orders. But subordination to the committee was possible only because the absolute loyalty of the Central Committee toward every member of the party was well known, as well as the constant readiness of the leadership to hand over every serious dispute for consideration by the party. And, finally, what is most important, the Central Committee possessed extraordinary theoretical and political authority, gained gradually in the course of years, not by commands, not by shouting down, not by beating down, but by correct leadership, proved by deeds in great events and struggles.”

—*Writings 1930-31*, p. 155

It appears to us that the IS/IEC’s conception has other origins.

“Sycophancy is encouraged in the SL not through flattering speeches about the ‘genius’ or the ‘infallibility’ of Robertson and the rest of the leadership. It is encouraged by promoting a psychology of deference, occasionally promoted by overt intimidation. Why must one defer to New York’s judgment on the most trifling matters? Because the central leadership is a repository of great political experience and capacity. Because they have ‘passed far more tests’ than anyone else in the organization. Because to defy their ‘authority’ is tantamount either to rejecting the political tradition they ‘embody’ or failing to understand the organization question.

—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p. 9

“All that those trained in the new school of Spartacism can really be sure of is that Trotskyism is whatever the leadership says it is.... What counts is doing what you’re told.”

—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p. 14

We made a rather elementary distinction between the *norms* of democratic-centralist functioning and your implementation of them. Disingenuously, you write, “Yet to our mind agreement to the ‘norm’ entails agreement to its implementation.” Of course agreement to a norm entails agreement *that it be implemented!* Our difference is over the correctness of certain of *your particular* implementations compared with other possible implementations.

“But Jim did fail to pass one test. He didn’t, and probably couldn’t, construct a revolutionary internal regime. The internal regime is unhealthy. The authority invested in Jim and his closest associates is absurd and dangerous. It is not enough to have a formally correct program; one needs a revolutionary party capable of producing real cadres. Jim never rose to this challenge, because of his excessive preoccupation with formal programmatic integrity and political homogeneity. The right balance was not struck. He certainly didn’t even try to establish the balance that Lenin achieved in the Bolshevik party, that Trotsky achieved in the Fourth International, and that Cannon achieved in the SWP. And I think that the reason is plain, and has even been alluded to by J.R. himself. Lenin, Trotsky, and Cannon’s organization’s all degenerated.

So it was up to J.R. to come up with a new formula (a new balance between democracy and centralism, between program and organization) which would ensure, above all, the integrity of the program."

—ET Bulletin No. 4, p. 9

"Robertson adopted the conception which Cannon advanced in *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* that organizational differences frequently mask latent political differences, but with a convenient corollary from Healy — that organizational grievances in the absence of formal 'political' differences are only raised by anti-party wreckers looking to form rotten blocs....

"It is perfectly possible for slick leaders to write ten constitutions guaranteeing freedom of criticism in a party and then create an atmosphere of moral terrorization whereby a young or inexperienced comrade doesn't want to open his mouth for fear he will be made a fool of, or sat on, or accused of some political deviation he doesn't have in his mind at all."

—The SWP in

World War II, p. 329

"Robertson set up precisely this kind of operation. Initially it was designed to cheat history by short-circuiting the factional losses which usually result from sharp political struggle in a revolutionary organization. Resolving to avoid such losses in his operation, Robertson spent a great deal of time — particularly after discovering in 1972 that a whole section of the SL leadership was disaffected and threatening mutiny — sniffing out potential opponents and hitting them before they could do any damage."

—ET Bulletin No. 4, p. 8

We believe that your analysis of the Spartacist League is of interest in this discussion. The ET provided the rough outline of a political critique of the organizational practices of the Spartacist League, along with critiques of various minor inconsistencies in Spartacist line and its application. The pre-fusion BT continued to criticize the Spartacist League on these and other matters, while devoting considerable space to the reporting of scandalous details on the SL. In 1990, the BT, PRG, and Group Fourth International all recognized that a major line difference with the SL had emerged over the DDR, and subsequent differences over the Soviet Union have widened the gap.

We agree that these line differences with the SL are of signal importance, and we do not too much miss the scandal stories. We note, however, that the IBT's revised account of the degeneration of the SL in 1917 No. 9 ("We Go Forward!") drops or at least completely fails to refer to the central ET thesis that the organization question is a political question (i.e., that it may be legitimately raised independent of questions of programmatic difference). Was this intentional, or was it an "accident"?

Perhaps you might argue that, with respect to a tactical stance toward the SL, the organization question in the special form given it by the ET has been historically rendered moot. We understand that the majority of the GS comrades, while agreeing that the SL was bureaucratically deformed, had not historically accepted the ET organization thesis prior to the fusion. We are aware of no discussion of this issue whatsoever in the literature of the PRG, nor do we recall any mention of it in post-fusion IBT literature. Finally, we note your insistence in your letter that our misgivings about the organizational health of the IBT must represent programmatic differences, which appears to us to be clearly inconsistent with the central ET thesis. What is the IBT's current position on the ET's thesis on the organization question? Do you still stand on it or do you reject it?

While failing to mention the organization question, "We Go Forward!" simplistically asserts instead that the degeneration of the SL is the direct result of the megalomania of Jim Robertson (pp. 4-5). This seems to us as inept as the explanation of Stalinism by the megalomania of Joe Stalin.

In addition: if on the one hand, as you write, program is everything that a group does and stands for, specifically including organizational practices, and on the other hand, as stated in "We Go Forward!", the Spartacists had a consistently revolutionary program until the late 1970s (p. 4), does that mean the IBT has *no* differences with the organizational practices of the Spartacist League prior to the late 1970s?

Comrade Turner in fact recalls that in a conversation he had with Comrade Riley in winter 90-91, Comrade Riley stated with complete sincerity and without qualification that he intended to build the IBT, or that the IBT ought to be built, using the SL of the early 70s as an organizational model. Does the IBT stand by this view? (Riley specifically counterposed the "early-70s SL" organizational model when Turner made passing reference to Riker's known preference for an "early SWP" organizational model. Riley emphasized to Turner that Riker's view on this matter was not that of the IBT.)

"By the late 1960s virtually all of the founding cadres of the RT had disappeared and Jim Robertson was left alone at the top. The cadres who remained in the organization, particularly after the departure of Dave Cunningham et al in 1972, were products of the radicalization of the 1960s, and had pretty much been shaped by Robertson."

—ET Bulletin No. 4, p. 3,
emphasis added

“Most of the techniques employed in the purges in the SL didn’t have to be improvised... [The SL] had long operated at the Healyite margin of what could be considered ‘democratic centralism’...”

—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p.

The significance of the foregoing factors is that they effectively *eliminate the preconditions for forming factions* in the organization — if members are too mistrustful of being ‘turned in’ to the party bureaucracy to be able to talk to each other, how can they ever get together to form factions?”—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p. 6

Let us be blunt. Were a fusion to occur, we would begin as a minority. To the extent that we would have a separate agenda, our efforts would be directed first and foremost to winning a majority of the membership to our point of view through democratic discussion. Until we were close to accomplishing this, any reform proposals we might make would be conjuncturally determined in accordance with this primary objective. We believe the IEC probably has a better understanding of our point of view than it acknowledges, but we are by no means sure that this is true of the IBT membership. We want to talk to the membership.

We would not come in with a laundry list of reform proposals. You have rather imaginatively attempted to extract a program for reform of the IBT from the Nelson/Williams document. We would not in fact subscribe to any part of this “program” as laid out in your letter. Specifically, we would not seek to “prohibit private political correspondence between a junior comrade in one locale,” “prohibit the individual members of a leading body from making decisions on its behalf (subject to its review),” “prohibit the organization as a whole from limiting the scale of a local publishing venture,” or “make it obligatory to supply the treasurer of any branch with the financial records of the other branches.” These are wild extrapolations. If we are to have a serious discussion, you must read what we have to say a little more carefully. The Nelson/Williams document addresses the narrow but important question of the legitimacy of some of the IS/IEC’s key claims in the 1917 West dispute, and does not advocate any of the things you mention.

As to the amalgam of other items you speculate we might be concerned about:

It is quite possible that, under the appropriate circumstances, we might exercise our democratic right to propose an alternate leadership slate.

We do not propose to change the character or target of 1917, although we would favor its more frequent appearance. (We do think something is very wrong with an international leadership that devotes major resources to the suppression of a local publication containing its political line, while neglecting the timely publication of the international organ.)

We would be much more likely to argue for the abolition of “national sections” than for the creation of two of them in North America.

It is indeed possible that we might advance some proposal for a modification of the pledge schedule, but we regard this as a secondary issue.

We utterly reject Comrade Logan’s stated view that an organizational periphery not “in motion” either toward or away from the group is to be viewed primarily as a negative encumbrance on the organization. While we would agree that a large organization would be preferable to a small organization with a large periphery, we consider it the height of absurdity to maintain that a small organization would be better off without a periphery. While in the Bay Area, Comrade Logan expounded on this “theory” on at least two occasions. We understand that the PRG actually implements this conception by actively driving off people who have not joined within a set amount of time.

Logan justified this view by claiming that a “stable” periphery of nonmember supporters is by definition a repository of “lower consciousness,” and as such is necessarily a bad influence on the membership. By this logic, one could with equal validity claim that the working class as a whole is even more permeated with “lower consciousness” and is an even greater threat. Carried to its ultimate conclusion, it implies that the organization would be better off without the working class.

To portray the membership as passive vessels who must be protected from the influence of “lower consciousness” shows utter contempt for the membership. Even greater contempt is shown for the periphery (and by implication the working class), whose essence is to be a repository of “lower consciousness.”

Comrade Logan has a corresponding view that the international leadership is a repository of “higher consciousness.” (We first heard him articulate it at the Oakland conference in 1990.) We would always hope that the leadership would have higher consciousness, but we regard it as extremely dangerous to treat the leadership’s possession of “higher consciousness” as some sort of axiomatic truth, as Logan consistently does. With such a premise, one can justify anything.

“No one else has earned the right to be the Guardian of The Program. No one else has passed the Test. It’s *my* party, says Robertson, and he’s right.”

—*ET Bulletin* No. 4, p. 9

Comrade Logan clearly took a dim view of the periphery in the Bay Area. (We suspect that this was intensified by the fact that some supporters had the temerity to question his account of the 1917 West affair.) He completely ignored the periphery's historical contributions to the BABT's external work, and also showed a tendency to rewrite the history of the BABT itself in order to show that something had been "wrong" with the BABT for a long time.

We have independent knowledge and personal experience of the functioning of the BABT going back a number of years. Contrary to Logan's assertions, we believe that by any objective measure (external work, fundraising, attention to cadre education, membership statistics) the BABT was by far the most successful branch of the BT in North America. Although it had fallen on hard times, this was *still true* right up until the time of the 1917 West affair. Logan's attempt to portray the BABT as a systematic failure may have worked overseas, but with us he succeeded only in undermining his own credibility. (The other thing that contributed to undermining Logan's credibility from the beginning was his histrionics and obvious defensiveness in dealing with questions from the Cop-watch fraction about the circumstances of Riker's resignation.)

The failure of the BABT to be "integrated" into international functioning has also been overstated. After the formation of the IBT, the BABT provided significant assistance with the writing and editing of 1917, and was for a crucial period almost solely responsible for translating German-language communications to English for the IEC. The appreciation of this work by members of higher bodies is a matter of record.

So what was "wrong" with the BABT? We believe the answer is that it wasn't considered sufficiently "homogeneous" with the rest of the international, or at least with the Wellington/Toronto segment; i.e., the BABT was home to potential "troublemakers." The real threat of 1917 West was that it would give the BABT greater prominence and status. The international leadership didn't want the BABT to have greater prominence and status. What kind of leadership doesn't want its locals to have greater prominence and status?

1917 West was seen as "competition." In what? In building the IBT! This kind of competition a communist organization should be delighted with.

A true crime did indeed occur in the 1917 West affair. It consisted in the conscious wrecking of the BABT by the international leadership.

You inquire about the fact that James and Dan appeared with our group, but did not sign our January 1 letter, kindly adding that "We find it anomalous if your group has members who do not feel bound to accept your agreed political perspective." Need we inform you that we have nonmember supporters?

You ask to whom we were referring when we mentioned your "petty, bureaucratic treatment of loyal individuals seeking membership in your organization." The reference was to Comrades Nelson, Williams, Leisler, and Oren, all of whom had attempted to apply for membership as individuals prior to the formation of our tendency. As to "precisely what aspects of their treatment [we] find objectionable," these comrades would have been instantly accepted by a serious organization. Instead, they had been variously lectured at; had derogatory statements made about them; and, many weeks later, still had not been allowed to join.

As to Comrade Riker's promise to publish the documents on the 1917 West affair, we believe you know that it was in deference to Oren, Leisler, James, and Dan that he did not carry it out immediately. As we believe you also know, it was Leisler and Oren who convinced him not to publish at a second date. Riker's plans remain suspended in deference to us.

We confess that our interest in dissuading Riker from publishing is selfish. As long as the possibility of exposing the leadership *internally* remained open to us, there would of course be no need to publish documents proving that that same possibility is becoming increasingly slim.

We assume that since we are now talking in terms of a hypothetical fusion, our membership in the IBT would not be subject to any period of candidacy and we would have full conference rights. We further assume that no artificial barriers to our exercise of local majority rights in the Bay Area would be created; that the BABT would be restored to full local status and the other extraordinary restrictions on its functioning removed; and that our comrades in Toronto would not be subjected to harassment.

Yours for Leninism,
Chris Turner
for the Working Committee
February 8, 1993

Mike A. Letter on BT Dispute—2/11/93

Dear Comrades,

I was **given** the internals regarding the current factional situation in the BT by Riker. It is unusual for non-members to be **given** access to internal documents, however the BT has an unusual history and periphery and I appreciate being **given** access to the documents.

It is **apparent** that my donation played a role in this fight. My first letter may **not** have made it clear enough. If anyone **had** said that my \$600.00 donation was to be used for a local publication **1917 WEST** and was to be over and above my regular pledge I would have responded by saying that there was no way I could do that. The \$600.00 was a back **pledge**. If I said I have \$600.00 for **1917 WEST** but nothing for the national or international, I then become not **only** a national chauvinist, but a local chauvinist. I am rightly accused of paying a pledge on an irregular basis, but I **don't** like the implication that I'm a Bay Area Patriot.

From **the** outside this faction fight seems incredibly stupid and would be laughable were it not for the fact that so many key **cadre** are willing to go the mattresses over it. The movement is weak **enough**, without having people split over an issue like this one. I can't imagine this being the issue that I would become re-politicized over.

That **the** local had the talent and energy to put together this publication is amazing and the BT should go to great lengths to **hold** onto these people. On the other hand Riker and Smith should have the honesty to admit that in hindsight its **publication** may have been a mistake, just count the back issues in the office.

By **the** way what were the Comrades in N.Y. supposed to do paste ["**EAST**"] over the["**WEST**"] and sell it? Hopefully I've documented that the money collected for **1917 [WEST?]** was not as some people claim, collected locally

I do **believe** that Riley made a serious tactical mistake by not being up front with the financial records, it only **fed** the fires of distrust. When comrades in a particular local are requested to front the funds for a particular project, documentation as to why should be available on request. In this case especially, given the many of our history [sic] in the SL, trust of the IEC cannot be taken for granted.

Having read the documents, I agree with Riley's position and have little comprehension of the heat it has generated. Apparently it has a "guess you had to be there quality." It is my hope that the faction will be let back in and a non-destructive, clarifying fight can be held. I agree with the analogy if someone wants to leave, then leave, don't poke holes in the boat on the way out.

Comradely Greetings,
Mike

Statement by Riley for IEC—2/14/93

(Excerpt)

On the Smith-Boyd Incident

Over the past years we have somewhat aberrant behavior and uncomradely conduct have been periodically noted in the BAPT. This has included verbal abuse, unruliness, rudeness and other forms of non-socialist behavior which have moreover sometimes been accompanied by expressions of social backwardness on the gay question and particularly the woman question. One of the chief offenders has for years been comrade Smith. The BAPT has at various times attempted to prevail upon him to modify or correct his behavior, and to some extent he has improved over the long haul.

The incident which occurred on 30 January involving Boyd went beyond verbal/psychological abuse and involved physical intimidation and, eventually, a potentially extremely dangerous and ultimately demoralizing physical confrontation between two long-time comrades. We have three written accounts of what transpired, all of which agree on certain important elements of events, while differing over several secondary questions.

Boyd and Smith agree that the incident commenced in the office when Smith became angry at what he saw as Boyd's repeated nagging at him to billet Janine. Smith physically pursued Boyd out of the office, and either deliberately or accidentally overturned a heavy table, spilling coffee and papers on the floor.

...
However we may evaluate the politics or character of individual comrades it is absolutely impermissible to use physical violence or the threat or implication of violence to make your point in this organization. It is quite possible that comrade Boyd pursued the question of accommodation for Janine with comrade Smith in a clumsy and even a harassing manner, inconsistent with the standards of a good organizer. However, this is no excuse for threats of violence against him. If a comrade feels harassed by another comrade and cannot get satisfaction by ordinary methods of argument, he or she should take the matter to a body of the organisation or to a more senior comrade.

Whether or not Boyd pestered Smith regarding billeting a response of threats of bodily harm (ex-

plicit or implicit) is an abuse which is simply intolerable. Several months ago we made it very clear to ex-comrade Riker when he threatened physical violence against comrades that this was an expellable offense. After receiving Riker's written retraction of those threats he was permitted to remain in the organization. But this is not something which we will take lightly.

Force is permissible against a member only to prevent a violent act which has either begun or which it is reasonable to believe is about to begin, and is permissible only to the minimum extent necessary to prevent a continuation of the violence.

There is no question that both of the central comrades in the dispute made mistakes, but the mistakes were of a very different magnitude.

It is clear from all accounts, including Smith's, that Boyd reasonably believed that Smith was about to act in a violent way towards him. Boyd's blows are partially excused by the fact that they were motivated by fear and in a spirit of self-defence. However, we cannot have comrades striking other comrades even if they, in good faith, consider that they are soon going to be attacked and want to get in first with some preliminary blows, unless it can be shown that such blows are essential to restrain the aggressor and minimize the danger. In this case a more effective means of avoiding attack would have been a more rapid departure from the scene.

The IS therefore recommends that the IEC register its criticism of comrade Boyd's action.

However it is clear that the overwhelming bulk of the responsibility for this potentially very serious incident lies with comrade Smith who was clearly the aggressor throughout. Even making the maximum concessions for the possibility that he was pestered regarding billeting and that this sorely irked him, it is absolutely impermissible to deal with such matters by resort to physical threats and intimidation.

Any organization which permits such behavior is not a serious revolutionary formation. We are not prepared to tolerate it, and comrade Smith must be made aware of this.

Comrade Smith, who in the past period has been in a minority on a major dispute involving the local and the IS, which has doubtless put considerable strain on him, and his relations with other members of the IBT, cannot expect special privileges to abuse, intimidate, threaten or physically pressure comrades who he may disagree with, hold in contempt or resent. The fact that Boyd struck two blows at Smith before Smith "acquainted him with the pavement" does not, in the concrete circumstances, absolve Smith of the essential responsibility for this disgraceful incident.

Comrade Smith is culpable both in respect of his aggressive intimidation and implicit and explicit threats of physical violence before comrade Boyd's blows, and in respect of his subsequent deliberate continuation and escalation of the physical fight.

Comrade Smith's account essentially ignores the question of his preliminary threats of violence, and treats the subsequent continuation and escalation of the physical fight as justified on the grounds of Boyd's blows. We wish to make it clear that a blow does not entitle a comrade to retributive violence, beyond the minimum necessary to restrain the initiator.

The IS therefore recommends that the IEC vote to suspend comrade Smith for a period of two months in accordance with the following provisions:

- a. This suspension applies to the IEC and all other IBT bodies.
- b. During this time Smith is not to attend any political meetings of the IBT, or any other political organization, including the committee opposed to police murder in which we are presently active, all ORO events, all political meetings, demonstrations, forums, debates or any other activities which fall within our traditional definition as political events. The sole exception to this is participation in meetings of Smith's union.
- c. During the period of his suspension comrade Smith is to continue to pay a full pledge.
- d. While suspended Smith is denied access to the BABT office and all communication with comrades of the IBT. The IS will designate a comrade to contact comrade Smith every two weeks to keep in touch with him and advise him of developments. The IS may contact him at any point during his suspension for any other purpose if it deems it necessary.
- e. After completing his suspension comrade Smith will once again be eligible to participate in all the bodies of the IBT of which he is a member.

The IS calls on all IEC members to communicate their vote to Toronto within 72 hours on these two motions:

1. To criticize comrade Boyd's action in striking Smith in anticipation of an attack.
2. To suspend comrade Smith for a period of two months in accordance with the above provisions.

Letter from Montreal—2/14/93

(Exerpt)

Dear Tom,

There isn't a great deal to report, but I'll report anyway. I received a package in the mail from Com-puserve, but we have been managing okay so far without my own hookup, and you will probably proceed to cancel my separate membership if such has not already been done.

I'll forward you my comments on any necessary changes to the Spanish 1917. . . .

We can work out a division of labour, where I and perhaps some other comrade who can read Spanish gets the Spanish language material, and you, Jim, Bill and whoever else shares an interest in developing this polemic gets the English language material.

Aren't you lucky I've been trained as a historian, so I have a fair bit of familiarity with working through indexes, finding research references, working with foreign languages, etc. I likewise have done some graduate studies in Economics and Business a decade past, and retain most of that knowledge, so I'm familiar with the literature on international trade and investment, development policy, statistical analysis and regression, managerial theories of "labour participation" and even econometric models. While none of this may be of immediate value, it may well prove useful at some point down the road.

...

The Babt Fiasco

Moving right along, the public sparring match between BABT comrades is a disgraceful piece of business and those involved need time out. Comrades are correct that a leave of absence for those involved is in order. This will of course paralyse what remains of the BABT's work, but I can't see any positive work being done in this type of climate. . . .

Relations with other ORO's here in Montreal are much more friendly than relations within the BABT. This should tell us something. The Spartacists are something else again, but the other groups argue with our political line on a given question, or maintain a diplomatic silence (Mobilisation) for fear of offending a "groupe ami", as they call us, but none indulge in any personal attacks, and relations are on a first name basis. You might argue that this reflects the "immaturity" of the Quebec left. The Russian worker's movement at the turn of the century was also "immature" in this sense, one of history's wonders, as Deutscher described it.

This of course ties in with this whole group X development, and we should seriously consider wrapping this business up. I don't see much purpose in continuing "fusion talks" with the Mensheviks. They are "soft" on the organizational question, what more can I say. Does this warrant a split? It did, in Lenin's opinion, and Trotsky ultimately came around to support this position. This periphery, who couldn't cut it as Bolsheviks, has their own "periphery" and even include them in their political discussions with us. They don't even know where to draw the line organizationally. It's as if we invited Richard St. Pierre and some Montreal B.I.A. supporters into our discussions with the PBCI. This has to stop, we can't continue discussing our internal affairs with the world at large.

They complain that the PRG is a monolithic hardcore bloc which drives its Menshevik periphery away, if after a given time it fails to assimilate such elements. They are actually complaining that they cannot find their political counterparts, an X Group periphery, in New Zealand. This merely tells me that while the PRG was building itself as a Bolshevik organization, the BABT was creating an X Group Menshevik periphery, who "agreed", more or less, with the political line, but complained about the required commitment, the dues structure, the organizational "chain of command".

Let's not forget that at the time of 1903 split, they were no clearly expressed political differences between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. They voted together more or less on the political resolutions, and argued jointly against the Bund, the Economists,

and other opponent tendencies within the ranks of the Russian Social Democracy, but disagreed on the organizational question.

These disagreement ultimately found political and programmatic expression: the Mensheviks were "soft" on liberalism itself, and not merely on the organizational definition of a "member", and such member's prerogatives.

Enough nonsense about "absolute obedience" and "unconditional obedience" in the IBT. There is no basis in fact for any of these bald assertions. Andrade, Maurin and Nin of the POUM defended their opportunist line with polemics of this nature against Trotsky, and in this were assisted by numerous little cliques of X Group malcontents and intriguers within and around the fringes of the European Trotskyist movement, who claimed to be "loyal members" with no serious political differences, but who had no stomach for a serious political fight and grumbled

about Trotsky's "sectarianism", "commandism", the "bad regime", etc. I have Andrade's and Nin's original polemics, published in Spanish, in my files. Much of this could be republished today and signed — Group X.

The X Group rewrites the history of the IBT to make it appear the only serious differences you had with Robertson focused on the "organizational regime". The disputes over the Bay area boycott, the defense brigade at the Democratic convention, the Andropov Brigade, Marines in Lebanon, the KAL/Challenger incidents, the Afghan brigade, "Hail the Red Army", "anyone can betray" Stalinophilia, etc., these are all only **minor political differences**. Who are they kidding? If I felt the differences were simply minor, I would not have broken off discussions with the Spartacists to join the BT.

Let me put it another way. The Jimstown critique convinced me there were serious problems with the Spartacists. I had surmised as much with my own observations. The organizational critique did not convince me, however, that the BT was anything more than some X Group collection of malcontents. The political critique convinced me that the BT was a serious political factor despite its size, isolation, etc. An organizational critique alone would not have won me. I have no interest whatsoever in spending my life standing outside Spartacist meetings complaining about the regime. If I had met the X Group, rather than the BT, I might still be with the Spartacists like Denis is today, or more likely doing some "Trotskyist" entry into Mobilisation. I would not however be with the X Group, as I take my politics seriously and they have nothing serious to offer.

They do have a political line of sorts, however. *1917 West* is much more their publication than ours, and had there been no editorial advice from other IBT comrades, would have been completely theirs. It even contains signed articles from the X Group periphery in the form of book reviews. It's small wonder the X Group adamantly defends *1917 West*, they helped produce it and it illustrates quite adequately their political appetites and conceptions.

Paul and Neil's critique centered on the organizational aspects with regard to its publication, the unauthorized use of the organization's funds, publicly flaunting the authority of the organization as a whole, a sloppy and amateurish covert job, etc.

But let's take a look at the political line, and see what they offer the revolutionary left in the way of political perspective. In the piece on the Cuban revolution signed by J. Leisler, one of the signatories, if I am not mistaken, of the X Group declaration on the bureaucratic degeneration of the IBT, we are informed that Janette Habel of the USEC, while "muddling on the questions of workers' democracy and Stalinism"....."has nonetheless made a valuable contribution to the existing literature on Cuba"... "her analyses are often sharp and illuminating". And Leisler concludes:

"Too bad she isn't in our camp".

Now is this any way to polemicize with the renegades of Trotskyism?

I can see Trotsky writing about Otto Bauer, Hilferding, Blum, Caballero, Norman Thomas, Fenner Brockway, etc., that while they "muddle" on the question of workers' democracy and Stalinism, among other questions, they nonetheless make "valuable contributions to the existing literature" on the Soviet Union, which he would highly recommend to all advanced workers. And he would conclude with the regret "Too bad they aren't in our camp".

Now of course Trotsky wouldn't be caught dead writing this sort of wretched nonsense, and the Stalinists would have had a field day if some irresponsible dilettante such as professor Burnham had actually produced such a piece in a Trotskyist journal. I'm surprised the Spartacists have not had a field day with *1917 West*.

I can only conclude they're preoccupied with other matters, but they will very likely get around to it eventually and the X Group has provided them with good material for a smear job on the whole IBT. But it's not our line, even if we end up getting tagged with it. This is what the whole *1917 West* dispute is about!

Had Cannon been faced with such treachery by Burnham and the usual gaggle of Menshevik malcontents, he would have printed a retraction and a disclaimer, and if it came to a fight over the prerogative of a "tendency" to publicly peddle their own shoddy goods under the "Trotskyist" label in the party press, or in their own press which fraudulently appropriated the party name, would have expelled them outright. The actual dispute in 1939 largely developed along these lines, and we stand fully with Trotsky and Cannon in this dispute.

This is the heritage we stand upon, this was the actual practice of the International Left Opposition, notwithstanding Trotsky's advice to German communists in 1931 when the Left Opposition considered itself an external faction to an existing mass Communist Party with

Several million members and numerous publications. Trotsky had the opportunity to address this issue once again in 1939 during the Burnham-Shachtman dispute and came out unambiguously in favour of the party's right to present and defend the majority line, and it alone, in its public work. He correctly labelled the Shachtmanite publication as "counterfeit" Marxism.

Let's try to put things into context. Our historical reference for our organizational practices is the International Left Opposition and not the mass communist parties of Europe of the early 1920's.

But **even** with the mass communist parties, it is unlikely they would have sanctioned articles by Paul Levi or Brandler, **saying** in effect Bauer, Hilferding and Kautsky are quite erudite and brilliant, it's too bad they're not with us. This **would** constitute grounds for expulsion from the Communist International. Local "autonomy" is a poor defense for a **Menshevik** line.

This is what it boils down to. An opportunist organizational conception finds its counterpart in an opportunist political line.

What is the BABT arguing for in its publication? The USEC has a "confused and muddled line" - to say the least, their "confusion" leads them into Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary camp - but they make "often sharp and illuminating", **even** "valuable" contributions to the existing literature on the deformed workers' states. Do we recommend them or not? We don't really know. If we recommend them, what are we doing in the BABT? Well, the party recommending the USEC for its "often sharp and illuminating", if somewhat "muddled" analyses is not really a member of the BABT but of its Menshevik periphery X Group which would like to extend its organizational and political conceptions to encompass the entire IBT. The reader of course does not know this, and would therefore quite properly assume that some secondary differences divide the IBT from the USEC, but that the USEC does some "valuable" work and its comrades are highly regarded by the IBT, that the USEC constitutes some sort of "groupe ami" for the IBT. Inasmuch as the piece was approved for publication, the onus for the errors contained therein falls as much on the BABT as on the individual author.

The above noted political perspective may very well be the position of the entire X Group inasmuch as they give voice to this perspective in their publication, and if so we have a real political difference which transcends pompous treatises on the presumed rights of disloyal members and non-members alike to lecture an organization on its internal affairs, publicly flaunt its decisions while appropriating its name for their own political activities, deliberately misusing its funds, etc.

This is all so elementary I'm surprised we're even arguing it. All I can conclude is that years of isolation and the victories of the counterrevolutionary offensive have thrown some comrades back to pre-Leninist conceptions of organization long ago superseded and discarded.

Imagine if this piece on Cuba praising the USEC for their valuable contributions had been translated into French and Spanish. I'm sure Action Socialiste, Mobilisation and the Bloc internationaliste

would have appreciated this "clarification" of our differences with the USEC, not to speak of the Argentine comrades of the PBCL. If we were to introduce the X Group tactical approach here, I would write congratulatory pieces on La Gauche, praising Michel Mill and Fran'ois Moreau's wit and intelligence, wishing they would join us. Why go after the small fry when you can go after the big game? Maybe we should just write Ernest Mandel, praise his erudition and intelligence, his valuable contributions to Trotskyist literature, and invite him to join us?

Such an approach fails on all counts. It miseducates the vanguard elements we seek to address. The USEC does not make contributions of any value to the task of forging and politically arming a revolutionary vanguard, it is not a positive but a negative quantity, it has and will continue to mislead, to capitulate under the pressure of alien class forces, to betray. If I did not believe this, I would not have broken from the USEC's orbit. The USEC does offer a form of leadership, but it is leading those who accept its claims and its authority down a path of political and organizational liquidation we do not wish to follow. This is all so elementary that even centrist outfits like Action Socialiste and Mobilisation, which lay no claim to Trotskyism, have been polemicizing with the USEC along these lines, inviting them to liquidate into the bourgeois nationalist Parti Quebecois where they belong.

The USEC does still contain some valuable cadre within its ranks, but less and less so as time goes on, and these are by no means the most erudite, educated and polished of their top ranks, but rather some good, honest militants who may voice some doubts about the value of the political perspective offered, but lack the tools to combat their leadership's treachery. Flattering the intellectual abilities of their leadership will not bring the rank and file any closer to the IBT, nor will it serve to break the top ranks of the USEC from the wretched reformist perspectives they hold so dear.

Flattery of renegades serves no political purpose whatsoever, except to discredit its author as an unprincipled opportunist seeking to barter in politics. Such practice will only disorient and demoralize those elements you have won to a revolutionary perspective.

Mandel's and Haber's erudition won't save the Cuban revolution, won't serve to defend the social gains of this deformed worker's state, because all of Mandel's quite appreciable talent, energy and intelligence, like those of Kautsky before him, have been placed in the service of a program inimical to world socialist revolution.

Mandel assisted in striking a very serious blow against the ability of this worker's state to sustain and defend itself by hailing the ascendancy of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a victory for Worker's Democracy. This is what the article should have said. We don't "need" Mandel and Haber, no more than Lenin and Trotsky "needed" Kautsky and Hilferding. They are where they belong, as are we. Those in the X Group who feel our arguments are too polemical and "sectarian" and wish to build bridges to our centrist and reformist ad-

versaries are clearly knocking at the wrong door.

There is one further element in the BABT piece I would like to address, and that is the assumption that erudition and literary ability can somehow compensate for the myriad political challenges and difficulties which face us. They can't and they won't. Intelligence and erudition is no substitute for political experience, commitment, dedication and loyalty to revolutionary program. Cannon may not have been as polished and sophisticated intellectually as Burnham, Pablo and a host of others but he was a Bolshevik and we lay claim to him as one of ours. And we take a certain pride in his accomplishments.

As Trotsky noted in a 1929 polemic with Maurice Paz:

"You do not find expressions forceful enough to disparage the five comrades who 'took their inspiration from Constantinople'. This sarcasm is out of place, and in bad taste. These comrades, however busy earning their living, came to help me at their own initiative and at their own risk, here, to Constantinople, at a very difficult time. Their help was invaluable to me. All of this is proper. But there is another part to the story. I said to myself, after having observed them closely, that comrades who are capable of such initiative and such personal sacrifice are revolutionaries, or can become such, because it is this way, comrade Paz, that revolutionaries are formed. You can have revolutionaries both wise and ignorant, intelligent or mediocre. But you can't have revolutionaries who lack the willingness to smash obstacles, who lack devotion and the spirit of sacrifice. I was not mistaken." Writings, 1929, p. 192.

So much for Mandel and Haber and those like them, who despite their intellectual talents lack one essential quality: they are not revolutionaries. They don't belong in the IBT, and neither do Mensheviks who disparage our admittedly meagre intellectual abilities and flatter those of renegades from Trotskyism. The IBT didn't get Mill or Mandel, Krivine, Haber or Moreau, it got me.

If any of the above named were better, they would be here instead of me. And a few IBT comrades, at least, think they got the better deal. For my part, I'm satisfied with my choice, and I'm satisfied with the leadership qualities I have observed in leading IBT cadre.

We are sneered at by the X Group because we consider ourselves to be a vanguard. Now what's wrong with that. Should we consider someone else to constitute a vanguard, follow them, wish they would join us and grace us with their wisdom. Bill Logan is correct on this point, as on numerous others. Our program defines us as a vanguard. Let the skeptics laugh, and continue to flatter the liquidators. Others are paying close attention to our program, our activities and our polemics.

On a final note, I believe the X Group lacks the necessary attributes of a revolutionary organization as defined by Trotsky. They lack a well-defined program, and substitute in its place a hodge-podge of organizational gripes. If past history is any indication, they also lack the required commitment, devotion and spirit of sacrifice of revolutionary militants. I don't think their place is with us, nor do I think they can cut it as an independent group. So let them publish their documents, if such is their intention, and find their niche in or out of politics. We have our own goals to accomplish, and can't constantly drag around dead weight or perpetually debate our organizational prerogatives with an external grouping which, for all intent and purposes, seeks to liquidate the IBT into a broad radical milieu of "peripheries".

Comradely greetings,
MARC

Appeal to IEC by Boyd—2/15/93

(Excerpt)

Comrades,

I have read the IS statement and motions and am relatively satisfied that a measure of proletarian justice will be served if the IEC upholds the IS suspension of Smith. Just in case anyone on the IEC is not convinced of the fairness of the determination, I am writing a few additional comments. Since Smith's actions could easily have been answered with an expulsion, I think he has actually gotten-off lightly.

I understand that given the fact that the IS decision was made only by reading reports and that Smith is a minority of one in an ongoing dispute which has become semi-public that a conservative response is dictated. I urge the IEC to uphold the IS suspension of Smith and to overturn the IS criticism of me.

...

No reasonable person can conclude that Smith's actions do not constitute an attack. Only a rigid formalism requires that the first blow is wrong. The context is everything.

The IS says that "unless it can be shown that such blows are essential to restrain the aggressor and minimize the danger" then striking the first blow is not acceptable. I agree completely.

Comrades of the IEC, the three reports and the IS conclusion indicate that my blows were not lightly considered pre-emptive strikes on Smith but in fact met the IS requirements for striking the first blow. They were "essential to restrain the aggressor to minimize imminent harm to myself." They were also as Smith agrees minimal blows meant only to stop him. After the first blow I backed off and appealed to Smith to stop and after the second defensive blow I tried to run away.

I am confident that after a careful reading of the three reports and the IS report that comrades of the IEC will overturn the criticism of myself in this incident.

Comradely,
Boyd

Letter from Riley to Marc—2/15/93

(Excerpt)

Dear Marc:

Thanks for your illuminating and entertaining letter. I have to admit that the soft formulation regarding the USec author of the Cuba book was not corrected at this end, and so I have to share the blame for that. This did not prevent me from enjoying the polemic. The question is, will these comrades ever publish anything, not whether it will be profoundly flawed (that is a given). We have not yet determined exactly how we plan to respond, although Jim wants the job of replying. In any case your input is welcome. I think that we are nearing the end with these characters, although I think that we can take our time putting anything in writing to them. And of course no discussion of it with them or anyone else.

...

CG's
Tom

PRG Organiser's Report -December 1992/January 1993

(EXCERPT)

...

Personnel and Organisation

As of two weeks ago, Barbara is the PRG Organiser. Everybody, including me, thought I was no longer performing the tasks associated with the position with enough vigour and consistency, and it was time someone else took over the responsibility. My personal circumstances have changed over the last year - I now have a demanding job and also a young baby - and so I have less time for politics. Also I think over the years I have become stale in the position and both I and the organisation need a change.

Barbara is extremely competent, reliable and well-organised and will also bring a lot more drive and enthusiasm to the position which could make a significant difference to the running of the Organisation. . . .

Communist Criticism

Bill came up with the idea of a one-off session, which we have called "Communist Criticism", where all comrades were expected to comment openly and frankly on the good and bad characteristics of other comrades. While I think nearly all of us subjectively dreaded the idea, we all also recognised that we are a bit reticent when it comes to open assessment of each other and this was one way to encourage criticism of both the executive and mem-

bership and also improve the general consciousness of the organisation.

The criticism session was held on a whole Sunday and then over two normal meeting nights. The general feeling in the organisation seems to be that it was an extremely useful and positive exercise. We have, at least partially, achieved our aim of both increasing the general consciousness of the organisation as to each other's strengths and weaknesses and also we are probably a group of individuals who are more willing to openly assess each other in the future. . . .

Membership Meetings

We have continued to have PRG membership meetings every fortnight with BC meetings every other week: obviously a lot of meeting time has been taken discussing the X group; two meetings were spent on "Communist Criticism"; also we have recently read and discussed the book by Shachtman, "The Fight for Socialism", which we will use as a recruiting tool for new contacts. We will be discussing the latest "Spartacist" at our next meeting.

CG's

David (19 February 1993)

Letter from Smith to BT/IEC—2/20/93

To the members of the IEC:

Riley called me this past Friday night to inform of the outcome of the IEC vote. In the course of our conversation I informed him of the impractical nature of one of the provisions of the IS motion. Namely:

"b. During this time Smith is not to attend any political organization, including the committee opposed to police murder in which are presently active..."

I think the writer of this motion is referring to The Committee for Justice for Jerrold Hall and John Henry Owens. As I explained to him since it is not my habit to lie to people that I do political work with I was at a loss as to exactly what could be said to the Hall family and others involved in the work of the committee as to why I would cease to carry out my ongoing obligations for this committee.

Boyd previously agreed to do a report on the this split. The situation has become more complex due to a split in this committee. The results of this split, in part, had placed me in charge of the committee's outreach work. Formerly a subcommittee had collectively carried out this activity.

The most successful aspect of this work is trade union outreach. Several unions have already passed resolutions in support of this case and in some cases, the ILWU local 10 pledged to donate money.

I am due to meet with Mr. Hall and Brother K., vice president of the transit workers union in San Mateo. I have made a pitch for support to this case at the Exec board meeting of my local and it may go before the next membership meeting. There are still some loose ends tangling in terms of the projected benefit for this case at the Local 28 Hotel and Restaurant Workers union. There is more. Too much to mention now.

Given the key role that Smith plays in this work his desertion of this work would definitely hurt the campaign. In short, because of the relatively high public profile of this case coupled with the fact that a number of OTO's and other ORO's are still active in and around it, it is my considered opinion that it would be extremely damaging to the reputation of the IBT if Smith were to abruptly abandon this campaign.

It seemed to me that Riley understood this. He asked me to write this letter for your consideration.

Smith

Letter from Boyd to BT/IS—2/22/93

(Excerpt)

Comrades,

As I figured would happen, I saw Smith at the Committee for Justice (for Jerrold Hall and John Henry Owens) meeting tonite. When he arrived we both acknowledged each other with a quick "hello."

...

Smith, as usual, takes on much more responsibility and volunteers to do things without much attempt to coordinate with me. For instance tonight he volunteered to do phone canvassing on Saturday which he certainly did not have to do.

Smith should be directed to closely coordinate all his committee activities with me and to get my approval as part of the terms of his suspension. He should not volunteer to do things in the middle of meetings. He knows how, if he wants to, to be tentative about taking on other responsibilities. His activity can be minimized without harming our reputation, and yet still be useful.

Unless he is required to closely coordinate with me he will continue to use the committee as an excuse to engage in a higher level of public activity than is either necessary or warranted.

...

All for now,
Boyd

Minutes of the Meeting of the international Secretariat, 2/27/93 (no. 38)

(Excerpt)

Present: Cullen (New York), Nason (Toronto), Riley (Toronto)

Agenda: 1) Smith Suspension, 2) Lutte Ovriere Fete, 3) WC

Re 1):

The IS has considered the points made in Smith's letter of 20 February regarding the question of the degree of participation appropriate in the Committee for Justice for Jerrold Hall and John Henry Owens (see motion of 14 February appended). We think it necessary to present a modified proposal for his suspension along the following lines:

Smith will be permitted to attend meetings of this committee only with prior permission from the IS. This means that at some reasonable time (at least 48 hours) before any committee event, Smith will have to submit a request to the IS in writing. The IS will decide whether or not he will be permitted to attend on a case-by-case basis. Smith is specifically instructed not to undertake any work for the committee without explicit IS authorization. Because of an element of confusion created by uncertainty regarding this question, Smith's suspension has not yet taken proper effect. The suspension will run for two months beginning March 1.

...

Re 3):

Cullen has volunteered to draft our reply to Chris's letter on behalf of the WC. We encourage all comrades to study the WC letter, so that they may be able to offer comments/criticisms on Cullen's draft.

Submitted by Cullen, 28 February; approved 28 February 1993

APPENDIX: ...

Correction to the Minutes

28 February 1993

Comrades:

Please note the following correction to the IS Minutes No. 38 which were sent out earlier today. A sentence reads:

"This means that at some reasonable time (at least 48 hours) before any committee event, Smith will have to submit a request to the IS in writing."

As we are suspending Smith's access to CServe for the length of his suspension it is unrealistic to require requests "in writing." Comrades will please correct their copies of the minutes accordingly.

CGs,

Tom for the IS

Letter from Smith to Riley—3/1/93

Dear Tom,

I just received a copy of the IS minutes number 38 of 27 February 1993 in effect ordering me to immediately halt participation in the Jerrold Hall Defense Campaign Committee in Copwatch. Unfortunately going to work and joining Boyd as one of your little pen pals would not leave me with enough time to actually do any political work for this defense campaign. I became a part of this campaign at its inception. The committee has suffered a terrible split and the campaign is on the ropes. Since I am one of the more politically experienced persons in the campaign, our allies have become dependent upon my participation. Your motion reads: "That Smith will be permitted to attend meetings of this committee only with prior permission from the IS. This means that at some reasonable time (at least 48 hours) before any committee event, Smith will have to submit a request to the IS in writing. ..." A subsequent message corrects this and says: "As we are suspending Smith's access to CompuServe for the length of his suspension, it is unrealistic to require requests 'in writing.'" What does this mean? How am I to make requests?

This is ridiculous, this has nothing to do with democratic centralism. There is an actual campaign going on here. A young black man was killed by the police and another young black man faces jail. As a member of the left and a black worker communist, I refuse to besmirch the reputation of the BT by abandoning this defense work. A number of our opponents are active in this campaign and my sudden withdrawal will weaken our political credibility and would constitute an act of political suicide on my part, which I am not prepared to commit.

I await your instructions.

With warmest
communist greetings,
Smith

Letter from Riley to Smith—3/2/93

Dear Gerald:

Your letter arrived yesterday (undated) commenting on the 27 February IS resolution which lays out the terms of your participation in the Jerrold Hall Defense Committee. You consider that it is impossible for you to check with the IS (by phone of course) at least 48 hours prior to meetings involving members of this committee. We find your attitude regrettable.

The reason you are suspended is because your behavior was incompatible with membership. We are prepared to permit some continuing participation by you in the work of this committee because we feel this best meets the needs of the organization. You feel differently. That is your right. But you are suspended and your opinion about how we organize our work is neither here nor there. Members of our group are not permitted to ignore the discipline of the organization.

You tell us that closely supervising your activity in the committee is "ridiculous" and "has nothing to do with the norms of democratic centralism." The norms of democratic centralism are clear—the minority must submit to the decisions of the majority.

You write that

INDENT***"As a member of the left and a black worker communist, I refuse to besmirch the reputation of the BT by abandoning this defense work. A number of our opponents are active in this campaign and my sudden withdrawal will weaken our political credibility and would constitute an act of political suicide on my part, which I am not prepared to commit."

Don't worry about our reputation. We intend to protect it by ensuring that all our members act as disciplined Leninists in their political work. We will have no freelancing, particularly from a comrade whose recent misbehavior has necessitated that his rights within the organization be suspended.

We might very well have required you to withdraw from the defense work entirely, but after consideration decided to permit your continued participation under close supervision. You are apparently unable to see the difference. This is unfortunate. We would prefer if you would act like a Bolshevik. Yet if you have reached the point where abiding by democratic-centralist discipline seems to you like "political suicide" then perhaps the best thing you could do would be to resign. In any case, we are not prepared to tolerate any further breaches of discipline by you.

Yours for Leninism,
International Secretariat

Report by Riley to BT/IEC—3/3/93

(Excerpt)

Dear Comrades:

I received a telephone call from comrade Gerald tonight at about 7:30pm EST (4:30pm PST). His tone was generally constructive. He advised me that he considered the instructions in the IS minutes to be contradicted by the correction which I sent out following the minutes to the effect that written requests/reports were not feasible because we were suspending him from Compuserve. He noted that the IS letter of 2 March mentioned that clearance for any activity in the committee at least 48 hours prior to each particular event would "of course" have to be done by phone. Smith said that this had not been at all clear to him when he wrote his response (1 March) and that this was what prompted him to use characterizations like "ridiculous."

We had some further discussion on the question of notification regarding committee events. He suggested that it would be easier and less expensive for him if he just notified Drew. I said that was unsatisfactory in the circumstances. We discussed the usual routine functioning of the committee. My impression is that there is a weekly meeting on Mondays that he would wish to attend, and in addition to this he has spent one or two 2-hour sessions making phone calls for them every week. Apart from this he apparently does no work for the committee.

I said that if he wrote up the regular assignments and the committee's meeting schedule (which he

agreed to do) then **the** IS could discuss it and consider making a blanket decision on the regularly scheduled meetings. This would **save** him calling every week for the same event. It is understood that any and all activities not specifically designated in any such blanket proviso would have to be specifically cleared. Gerald should undertake no new assignments for the committee without first obtaining IS approval. At this point we do not wish to deepen our (or his) involvement.

Gerald pointed out that it might sometimes be difficult to get in touch by phone. I said that if he tried he could usually reach one of us. If not he could leave a message on our answering machine. In any such case Gerald should simultaneously notify Drew (BABT organizer) of his proposal.

Gerald briefly discussed the fact that the committee is deeply split and neither fragment seems particularly viable. We agreed that we do not want to take sides in this wrangle, nor to participate in any exclusions etc. We are prepared to participate in anything useful which either side undertakes. The anarchists are poorly organized and somewhat incompetent, as well as quite willing to resort to political exclusions. The RWL-RTL have made pests of themselves spending more time maneuvering to get motions passed to amend the united front basis of unity into something with more of their politics ("leftish" propaganda bloc) than doing anything constructive.

As presently constituted this committee may not exist for long. The hearing for the youth obscenely charged with murder is March 16 and it may well be thrown out at that point, which could be the moment at which the committee expires. In general the level of activity is dropping.

...

CGs,
Tom

Letter from Clarke to the IBT—3/31/93

Dear Comrades,

It has been three months since we applied for membership in your organization. We sent you our formal application on January 1. Logan responded January 19, claiming that a "considerable written exchange" would be needed first. We sent you a substantial letter on February 8, addressing all the questions raised by Logan and clarifying statements in our application that were misinterpreted by you. Since your January 19 letter, we have had no official communication of any sort from you, and your members have used the supposed org-to-org discussions as an excuse to *avoid* talking to us.

We can only take your silence as a demonstration that you not take us seriously. We quote your closing remarks in your 1/19/93 communication: "Sometimes even some quite profound differences, with good will and through discussion, can be brought to the point where they can be accommodated. You must give us more information on which to judge."

We have given you plenty of information and ample time to organize discussion. This letter is to inform you that within 72 hours of the time this message is posted on Compuserve, we require a response to our membership application. Silence will be interpreted as refusal. If you do not accept us, we will become a public group. If you do accept us, it must be on the terms specified in our January 1 and February 8 letters.

Yours for Leninism,
Clarke
for the Working Committee

Letter from the IBT—4/3/93

Dear comrades,

We are in receipt of your letter over the name of comrade Clarke requesting within seventy-two hours a response to your application for membership of the International Bolshevik Tendency.

It has taken us longer than it might have to prepare a reply to you, and we understand your concern. However, work has been done on a response, and will be completed and sent to you within two weeks. We are simply not able to fulfill your request for a response within seventy-two hours.

Comradely
Bill Logan
for the IEC of the IBT

Letter from BT/IEC to Smith—4/13/93

Dear Gerald:

Given your decision to ignore the terms of your suspension by continuing to appear at public political events in explicit contravention of the decisions of the leading bodies of the IBT, (a point I mentioned to you last night when you called) we can only conclude that you have deliberately placed yourself outside the bounds of our common discipline. We also note that in contravention of our rules and guidelines you are now three months behind in payment of your pledge (since December.) In the circumstances, we can only assume that you wish to formally sever your relationship with the BT/IBT. In the interim the IEC voted to place you on full suspension indefinitely. If, as we presume, you no longer consider yourself bound by the decisions of the IBT the easiest and most straightforward means of resolving your status would be for you to submit a formal resignation.

We hope that you agree that at this time a formal clarification of our relationship seems would be most appropriate for both of us. We would like to do so with a minimum of acrimony, as we hope to continue political collaboration in areas of common interest, but at this point the question of your membership has been rendered moot by your feeling that you could not abide by the terms of the suspension imposed upon you.

Comradely,
Tom

Letter from BT/IEC, 4/17/93

Dear Comrades:

Marx wrote: "Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge [an historical epoch] by its consciousness..." The converse is also true. In your letter of 8 February, you claim to be in programmatic agreement with the International Bolshevik Tendency, and seem highly offended that we do not simply take you at your word and admit you into membership. But, as Marxists, we feel obliged to examine your professions of programmatic concurrence a little more closely. If, for instance, a self-proclaimed animal lover were to be regularly observed beating his dog, one would tend to be skeptical of his purported affection for animals. Similarly, there is what seems to us a glaring inconsistency in your assurances of support for democratic centralism.

We have always viewed democratic centralism as an essential part of our program. This is the meaning of the phrase "the regime question is a political question." Our critique of the Spartacist internal regime centers on the fact that Robertson reduced the democratic aspect of Leninist functioning to a series of empty formalities. In the BAPT fight, on the other hand, we were compelled to defend democratic centralism against an internal opposition that attacked its centralist component, i.e., the obligation of the minority to abide by the decisions of the majority and its elected representatives.

Democratic Centralism and the Press Dispute in BAPT

To recapitulate briefly: the Bay Area Bolshevik Tendency (BAPT) announced its intention to bring out a local publication, *1917 West*. The leading IBT bodies agreed (with some reservations) to let this project go forward, but the International Secretariat (IS) also directed BAPT to submit all articles for approval in advance, and to provide a detailed written proposal concerning, among other things, production methods and costs. Two leading BAPT comrades balked at this directive, and comrade Riker rushed to the printer in defiance of the IS and without the knowledge of most of the other members of the branch. When Riker was called to account for this act of indiscipline, he and Smith defended this behavior in the name of local autonomy. Comrade Riker explained their refusal to abide by the instructions of the IS quite bluntly to the 17 March 1992 BAPT local meeting:

"What we have here is a situation where a new and previously unheard of, and previously unauthorized, restriction on the ability of comrades to carry out their work is attempted to be imposed on this local. And we, having been through the Spartacist League, and having to put up with the high school sorority atmosphere in the Spartacist League, and the petty little bureaucratic edicts that were sent out to be obeyed without question, realize where this takes us. So, utilizing our comrade's new theory of contretemps, we said: 'Look, if we let 'em get away with it this time, it becomes the fucking standard.'"

The essence of the fight with Riker and Smith was the question of whether democratic centralism or local autonomy is going to be the guiding principle in the IBT. Local autonomy is not a program for building a revolutionary international. It is a program for organizational and political liquidation. We are determined to build an organization in opposition to any and all such conceptions.

You, comrades of the Working Committee (W.C.), claim to respect democratic centralism. Yet the political basis for your existence seems largely to revolve around support for what the overwhelming majority of the IBT regarded as a flagrant and deliberate breach of elementary democratic-centralist norms. This makes your professions of loyalty to Leninist organizational principles less than fully convincing.

You argue that you do not oppose democratic centralism as such, but the manner in which it was applied by the leadership during the BAPT dispute. You accuse two of our leading comrades of having acted in a high-handed, bureaucratic, quasi-Robertsonite manner. You worry that the IBT may well have taken the first fateful steps along the road of Robertson/Healy. But your 8 February letter contains more sound and fury than substance. It focuses on secondary issues, imputes sinister motives to our leadership, and makes liberal use of inflammatory terms—all with the consequence of obscuring the fundamental questions raised by this dispute: was the IS within its rights in instructing BAPT to submit a production proposal? were comrades Riker and Smith wrong to have defied that instruction?

The W.C. and the 1917 West Dispute

Your assessment of the BAPT dispute is contained in two documents: 1) "Bureaucratic Centralism in the International Bolshevik Tendency" by comrades Nelson and Williams (which you have endorsed), and 2) "Resolutions on the 1917 West Affair," reproduced in your letter of 8 February.

In the first of these documents scant attention is paid to the defiance of the IS instruction by Riker/Smith, and the focus is on the motives of the IS. The principal argument is based on a minor factual inaccuracy in one of comrade Riley's documents ("Contretemps, Democratic Centralism and 1917 West"). Nelson/Williams note that the IS request for a written proposal from BAPT is not contained in the IS minutes of 15 January 1992, but in a letter dated 28 January and signed not by the IS, but by Riley. From this they conclude: 1) that the IS

request had no official standing, 2) that Riley's misdating represented a deliberate attempt to mislead the membership.

Riley, argue Nelson/Williams, knew that his letter did not represent a valid directive from the IS, and attempted to validate it by backdating it to the minutes of 15 January. They make much of the fact that the actual directive came after several articles for *1917 West* had been submitted to the IS/IEC for review, when funds for printing had supposedly been raised by BABT and the whole project was near completion. They suggest that the real purpose of the request was to stall the publication of the magazine indefinitely. By subsequently claiming that the request had been made two weeks earlier, when the project was not as far advanced, Riley was allegedly attempting to conceal his real intention, shared by comrade Logan, to sabotage the publication of *1917 West*.

None of this stands up under critical examination. First, anyone in the least familiar with the inner workings of the IBT is aware that it was and is a common practice for individual IS members to communicate on behalf of the IS. The very first sentence of Riley's 28 January letter reads: "This memo is a codification of the position of the IS on the question of '1917 West'." Not only was Riley's authority to write for the IS undisputed by any other member of that body, but, more significantly, it was not disputed by any member of BABT either. Never once during the long, acrimonious fight over the publication of *1917 West* did comrade Smith, Riker or anyone else in the Bay Area deny the existence of an official IS request for a production proposal. Williams and Nelson have concocted, after the fact, a sophisticated rationalization that never occurred to Riker or Smith at the time. If Riley's directive expressed the will of the IS, and was understood as such by everyone on the IS, everyone in BABT and everyone else in the IBT, as indeed it was, the fact that it was not signed by the entire IS is meaningless.

The fact that a number of the drafts for *1917 West* had already been submitted is likewise irrelevant. The procedures for reviewing the editorial contents of the magazine had already been agreed to, and were being duly observed (or, at least, so we thought at the time). The contents of the magazine were not in dispute. However, the question of how it was to be produced, and how much money was to be spent on it, was still unresolved at this point. It was chiefly because Riker and Smith had been evasive on this score that the IS felt it necessary to ask for a written proposal. Would such a proposal have caused a significant delay in the publication of *1917 West*? Perhaps. But only if the BABT comrades had objected to the ruling of the IS on their proposal, and had wished to discuss it further or appeal to the IEC.

W.C. Evades the Real Question

In the struggle against the Goldman-Morrow faction in the Socialist Workers Party, James P. Cannon noted that the minority raised a great hue and cry about supposed bureaucracy:

"In the heated atmosphere which has characterized every meeting of the Political Committee, [the leaders of the opposition bloc] have launched on a frenzied campaign of grievance-mongering, construing every administrative action, every organizational decision, and every oversight or minor technical error of the editors as further evidence in support of their thesis that the leadership has suffered a degeneration along the lines of Stalinism."

—The Struggle for
Socialism in the
'American Century', p. 56-7

Following this illustrious example, Nelson/Williams make a big deal of the fact that, in an internal document written two and a half months after the meeting in question, in the midst of a hectic press production, Riley made a minor factual error in the chronology. Nelson and Williams presume that this could only have been a deliberate attempt to mislead. But there is absolutely no logical or factual basis for such a presumption. Nelson/Williams implicitly reject the more obvious and innocent explanation: that Riley made a simple mistake. They reject this explanation without bothering to explain why.

Moreover, the speculations of Nelson/Williams about Riley's motives do not answer the principal question: were Riker and Smith justified in flouting the IS? Even if they thought Riley had been behaving improperly, the two leading BABT comrades still had the option of appealing the IS decision to the International Executive Committee (IEC). They knew, as Nelson and Williams also know, that the IEC has hardly acted as a monolithic bloc in the past. Had the rest of the IEC become either knowing or unwitting accomplices to the devious machinations of Logan/Riley? Once again, Nelson and Williams are silent.

The Nelson/Williams document is about the closest your group ever comes to a coherent argument about the BABT events. Your "Resolutions on the *1917 West* Affair" consist mostly of bald assertions, too numerous to attempt to answer point by point. They certainly make it clear that you disapprove of the way in which the IS/IEC handled the question of *1917 West*. But, beyond that, it is impossible to tell whether or not you think democratic centralism was ever violated in the BABT fight.

Two mutually contradictory strands of thought seem to be at work here. The first originates in the applications for membership of Oren and Leisler of 20 November 1992. Here they state that "Riker and Smith were wrong to violate democratic centralism," although they are said to have done so "in response to the provocations of

the I.S." This is consistent with statements in your 8 February letter to the effect that you have no quarrel with democratic centralism, only with the way in which it was implemented in this case. The IS, in other words, acted within its rights to require a proposal, but you think that, in doing so, it exercised those rights in a questionable and/or abusive manner.

But, alongside arguments like the above, you also embrace the Nelson/Williams line that no legitimate directive was ever issued by the IS to begin with, in which case Riker and Smith had no obligation to comply, and no violation of democratic centralism occurred. Which is it, comrades? You can't have it both ways.

In fact, a directive was issued...and defied—deliberately, openly and stridently. We had every reason to believe, given the attitude of Riker and Smith, that they were prepared to act in a similar fashion the next time they didn't get their way. At stake in this dispute therefore was the right of the majority of our organization—through its elected leadership in the IS and IEC—to control the publications, finances and activities of a branch. This was not merely a question of how democratic centralism should be implemented. It rather posed point-blank the question of democratic centralism itself. And it is precisely your willful refusal to see this, your rush to side with Riker/Smith, your initial reluctance to argue your position, and your present tendency to dubious and mutually inconsistent arguments that makes us skeptical of your genuflections before democratic centralism.

"Bureaucratism" in the IBT

But let us, for the sake of argument, examine your least implausible line of reasoning. It is indeed conceivable that a leadership can seriously undermine internal democracy while nevertheless acting within the letter of democratic centralism. No set of formal rules, no matter how well conceived, provide an ironclad guarantee against bureaucratic abuse when leading organizational posts are in the hands of aspiring bureaucrats. Opposing the particular decisions of a given leadership doesn't necessarily mean that one is opposed to democratic centralism as such. Let us assume that you do not question the IS's right to have requested a production proposal, but only its wisdom and/or motives in having done so.

You suggest that the directive was unnecessarily restrictive, and infringed upon prerogatives that BAPT had traditionally enjoyed. Is there any truth in these claims?

Before the whole subject of *1917 West* arose, BAPT had been in the habit of issuing leaflets and a union newsletter at its own discretion. Both the leaflets and the newsletter were always submitted to the IS prior to public release for review of political contents. Production methods and costs, on the other hand, were always determined locally. Comrades Riker and Smith attempted to present, and maybe honestly regarded, their decision to bring out *1917 West* as on the same level as previous literary efforts, and the proposal directive as a radical departure from past practice. You say in your "Resolutions" that the leadership prerogative by which we sought to control the costs of this project "had never been invoked," and that our attempts to circumscribe its political contents were "unprecedented."

So too, we might point out, were the dimensions of a local project on the scale of *1917 West*! Do you honestly mean to tell us, comrades, that there was no qualitative difference between *1917 West*, on the one hand, and a union newsletter and occasional leaflet, on the other? If Riker and Smith had got their way, we would have had in the Bay Area two English-language press organs, roughly similar in format, cost, size and political scope. You quote Trotsky to the effect that local organizations in the Bolshevik party always enjoyed a considerable measure of local autonomy and printed their own literature. Has it occurred to you that there might conceivably be some difference between a party with hundreds of local branches and tens of thousands of members, and an organization of our less-than-massive size? Under the circumstances, we think any reasonable person would conclude that our leadership's attempt to keep the efforts of BAPT within realistic bounds ranks somewhat lower than the Logan trial in the annals of bureaucratic atrocity.

We are not exactly sure how Comrade Turner got the impression that we do not approve of the organizational norms in Cannon's SWP. In general we think that they were just fine. In particular we would recommend Cannon's attitude toward those whose dearest principle is local autonomy on the press question:

"we never have tolerated local organs unless we found the necessity for them. In every case the issuance of a paper locally by our party would have to be approved by the National Committee and would have to be under the control of the National Committee. The purpose of that is, of course, obvious, that we want one uniform line of policy from New York to California."

—Ibid., p. 170

The "we" who would determine the necessity or feasibility of a local organ was not some local branch executive in California, but the central political leadership of the group. In our case, this would be the IEC, which mandated the IS to act on its behalf in the day-to-day functioning of the organization.

Criteria for Membership

What else, apart from our conduct in the 1917 West affair, has set off your Jimstown alarms? You mention our "petty, bureaucratic treatment of loyal individuals seeking membership in [our] organization." You refer specifically to comrades Nelson, Williams, Oren and Leisler. When asked what you mean by "petty, bureaucratic treatment," you answer that these four comrades attempted to apply for membership as individuals prior to the formation of [your] tendency," and "would have been instantly accepted by a serious organization. Instead, they had been variously lectured at; had derogatory statements made about them; and, many weeks later, still had not been allowed to join."

Leisler has never been a member of the IBT. But let us consider the other three, of whom we have more experience. Williams resigned in August of 1990, after having been a member of the Toronto BT for four years, partly due to difficulties in meeting his financial obligations to our organization. His resignation, dated 11 August 1990, reads in part:

"A more fundamental understanding of what led me to this decision [to resign].... would be found in its personal/historical root—my semi-nomadic, sub-proletarian background.

...

"In the four years in which I have been a member..., I do not believe I ever gave 100%. Seldom it was I gave 50. For the longest time I bought the generally correct argument that severing my connection to revolutionary politics would further steer me into the vicious cycle from which I was trying to break. Experience testifies, however, that (a) the connection remains weak and that, therefore, (b) the personal/political dichotomy instead of diminishing, increases—membership has become a test of perseverance.

"My conclusion is that the best thing I can do to remain in politics... is to get out—temporarily." (emphasis in original)

Nelson, also a long-time TBT member, handed in a resignation dated 3 July 1991. Here are the reasons he gave:

"My departure at this point from politics is strictly the result of my weaknesses. For me, chasing down contacts, lively demonstrations, intersecting ORO's is what I liked best about politics. Those conditions don't exist right now in Toronto. Bigger people, better communists switch gears. I can't."

Oren resigned from BABT because he could not or would not pay his monthly sustaining pledge.

So here we have three resignations: the first from a comrade who, by his own admission, was too unstable personally to remain a dues-paying member at the time; the second from a comrade who quit because revolutionary politics was becoming a drag; the third from another comrade who also did not feel able to go on paying a pledge.

Since resigning, all three separately expressed a desire to rejoin. It is true, as you point out, that we did not readmit them instantly. In two of the three cases (Nelson and Williams), the Toronto branch proposed a trial period of three months, during which they would pay a pledge and work under the discipline of the branch, with the understanding that they would be readmitted when the trial period had been successfully completed. Nelson was still a member when Williams reapplied, and fully endorsed this procedure. Williams also agreed that it was a reasonable requirement. As it turned out, he was not able to pay his pledge for three consecutive months, and voluntarily abandoned his membership perspective.

In September 1992 comrade Nelson reapplied for membership after a period of complete inactivity. The Toronto branch set the same conditions as it had for Williams. When it was discussed with Nelson last October he stated that he understood and agreed. In November comrade Nelson proposed to postpone implementation of this agreement, citing the necessity to first spend two months putting his personal affairs (finances, etc.) in order.

It seems that, according to you, our insistence that former members demonstrate that they have surmounted the problems that led them to quit in the first place somehow casts doubt upon our seriousness as an organization. For us, it signifies the opposite. We proposed a trial period precisely because we are serious about the obligations of membership, and demand a comparable seriousness from applicants. The IBT is not a hotel, where comrades can check in and check out as they please. We view membership as a long-term commitment, and wanted some reasonable assurance that these comrades would treat it in the same way. Yet you seem to view any attempt to hold individuals accountable for their past actions, or any attempt to impress upon them the seriousness of the obligations that go with membership, as an instance of "petty, bureaucratic treatment." Serious people are not affronted by being required to demonstrate commitment.

Party Membership: a Question of Consciousness

You accuse us of contempt for the BABT periphery and peripheries in general. In fact, we value the services and contributions of sympathizers. Unlike you, however, we insist that membership be distinguished from supporter status by a well-defined set of rights and corresponding obligations. Any group that views the responsibilities of membership so lightly as to admit sympathizers on demand, as you would have us do, cannot draw a clear line of demarcation between membership and periphery.

In your letter of 8 February you criticize the idea that a:

“periphery of nonmember supporters is by definition a repository of ‘lower consciousness,’ and as such is necessarily a bad influence on the membership. By this logic, one could with equal validity claim that the working class as a whole is even more permeated with ‘lower consciousness’ and is an even greater threat.”

We certainly do not consider that fellow travellers must necessarily represent a “bad influence” or a “threat” to a revolutionary organization, but they do indeed have a lower level of consciousness. To argue that those who are unwilling to take on the responsibility of membership do not have lower consciousness than party members is a rejection of one of the fundamental premises of the Leninist party.

Your recent track record provides another example of the same tendency, namely, your decision to accept Riker as a “member emeritus.” This, as you know, is a status Smith proposed for Riker shortly before Riker resigned from our group. Emeritus status would entitle Riker to all the rights of membership, without many of the obligations. Emeritus status befits veteran party members incapacitated due to illness or age. We by no means disparage comrade Riker’s many years in the Trotskyist movement. But he is neither incapacitated nor advanced in years. He is a fully capable middle-aged man who appears to be weary of the rigors of organized politics, but also to have a still-reproachful political conscience that won’t let him go gently. By demanding emeritus status, he seems to be seeking not to resolve this contradiction, but to elevate it to a special membership category.

You upbraid us for characterizing certain of your attitudes as Menshevik or sub-Menshevik. We would only remind you that it was precisely over the question of what constitutes a party member that the schism between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks first opened up.

The Bottom Line

Cannon said:

“There will always be minority groups and parties....And that will always create a certain amount of confusion. But it is better to have the confusion outside the party than inside. At least that was Lenin’s idea; and the historical test demonstrated that it was a very good idea. The worst confusion of all would be caused by transforming our party into a federation of factions. That is a program for confusion combined with paralysis.”

—James P. Cannon,
25 July 1945

We submit that there is a common thread running through all our differences. What you regard as instances of semi-Robertsonite high-handedness we tend to view as the normal functioning of a democratic-centralist organization, and the minimal exercise of the prerogatives and responsibilities of Leninist leadership. What to us is simply insisting on the subordination of lower to higher bodies is to you “hypercentralism.” Our attempt to ensure that the IBT’s limited resources are expended in accordance with our international perspectives, and not squandered on overzealous local projects, is, by your lights, “commandism.” And our attempts to maintain basic membership standards become “petty, bureaucratic treatment of loyal individuals” in your eyes.

We think that no two groups can take such a radically different view of the same organizational practices without also holding radically different views of what a revolutionary organization should be. Such deep-going differences must be programmatic in nature, even if, as in 1903, this is not (yet) fully understood by all the participants. We think there is little to be gained—and much to be lost in terms of time and energy—by pursuing these differences inside a common organization. We therefore decline to accept your joint application for membership.

Before closing this chapter in our organizational relations, however, it may not be entirely unavailing to make a few remarks on why we see things so differently. Our tendency took shape in the fight against the degeneration of the iSt. Consequently, our early propaganda placed great emphasis on the internal abuses of the Robertson regime. But none of your comrades, with the exception of Williams and your “member emeritus,” ever saw the Robertson regime from the inside. Perhaps this is partly responsible for your tendency to confuse the minimal functioning of Leninist leadership with bureaucratism of the Robertson/Healy brand.

But we also think there may be more to your method than inexperience. One notable feature of the BABT fight and its aftermath was the fact that, with the exception of the two members whose act of indiscipline started the fight, every member of the IBT sided with the majority. The Working Committee, by contrast, is exclusively comprised either of comrades who have never been IBT members or have dropped out. Why are your

members outside our **ranks**? There are two obvious explanations. Either you, as individuals, are not acting as Marxists, or there is something profoundly wrong with the IBT. Do you not, given the tendency of most mortals to self-justification, have a **motive** for inclining toward the latter explanation? And did not the BAPT fight provide you with the "evidence" you may already have been looking for? This is the kind of dynamic comrade Logan probably had in mind when he **spoke**, to your great indignation, about the tendency of people in peripheries to move either towards or away from a revolutionary organization. We suggest that the above questions are well worth pondering. If and when you have **done** so, it might be worthwhile for us to resume some form of dialogue in the future.

With Bolshevik Greetings,
Jim Cullen
for the IEC

APPENDIX

Following the Money

We would feel the above letter to be incomplete if we did not take this opportunity to lay to rest one widely repeated canard: the supposed compliance of comrades Riker and Smith with what they claimed were the original guidelines for the financing of the first issue of *1917 West*.

According to the Smith/Riker version, BAPT had obtained a "firm commitment" that funds raised for this project could be spent on it. Riker claimed to have raised the money for the publication of *1917 West* from sympathizers, only to be told that BAPT was not free to spend the money on the magazine without first getting IS approval. This is referred to as "moving the goalposts."

All parties agree that \$600 of the \$850 used to pay for printing costs was donated by Mike A., a long-time supporter. The following is an excerpt from a statement by Mike A., dated 11 February 1993:

"It is apparent that my donation played a role in this fight....If anyone had said that my \$600.00 donation was to be used for a local publication *1917 West* and was to be over and above my regular pledge I would have responded by saying that there was no way I could do that. The \$600.00 was a back pledge. If I said I have \$600.00 for *1917 West* but nothing for the national or international, I then become not only a national chauvinist, but a local chauvinist. I am rightly accused of paying a pledge on an irregular basis, but I don't like the implication that I'm a Bay Area Patriot."

Afterword by the Communist Workers Group

It is now obvious that the IBT never had any intention of engaging in serious dialogue with our predecessor organization, the Working Committee, despite the lack of formal programmatic differences between the two groups. This by itself shows what sort of organization the IBT has become.

Initially, the IBT leadership seems to have convinced itself that the Working Committee was a bunch of incompetents who were incapable of producing a coherent argument, and they adopted the tactic of insisting on a written discussion merely in order to show us up. When, contrary to the IBT's apparent expectations, the Working Committee produced a serious document (the letter of February 8) addressing all of the IBT's questions and raising some others, the IBT's purported enthusiasm for written discussion suddenly disappeared. When they finally responded via Cullen's letter of April 17, they not only broke off the discussion but conveniently excused themselves from answering our substantive arguments. The Working Committee letter of February 8 was dismissed as "sound and fury" and its resolutions on the 1917 West affair as "too numerous to attempt to answer." What this really means is that the IBT is utterly incapable of engaging in a serious political argument with us.

Marx's statement that "just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks of himself, so one cannot judge [an historical epoch] by its consciousness" does not disturb us in the least. In fact, we rather like it. We find it a little ironic that the IBT would use this particular argument against us, since it is the IBT that keeps finding it necessary to invoke "consciousness" in order to avoid answering our arguments.

Indeed, ever since we first expressed doubts about the actions of the leadership in the 1917 West affair, the IBT has concerned itself to an extraordinary degree with our "consciousness." This is not altogether surprising given the IBT's conspicuous internal preoccupation with its members' "consciousness," with "higher consciousness" and "lower consciousness" and all manner of — to be charitable — subjective judgments concerning "consciousness." The half of the organization directly answerable to Comrade Logan goes so far as to hold marathon "communist criticism" sessions devoted to the membership's "consciousness." Thus, too, Cullen devotes a heading to "Party Membership: a Question of Consciousness" and, in true Spartacist style, occupies himself making apolitical derogatory statements about members of the Working Committee. (The last failed to surprise us since Cullen had previously told Comrades Nelson and Williams that he saw "nothing wrong" with Frazier and Fischer's SL-type hit piece "The 'Holier Than Thou' Brigade Comes to the Rescue.")

The fact that former members blamed themselves rather than the IBT for the circumstances leading to their resignations is used against them, while the continued loyalty and active public support of the same individuals is passed over in silence. We cannot help but notice the parallel between this and the Spartacist League's similarly abusive utilization of the similarly self-blaming resignation letters of (now leading IBT comrades) Nason and Riley in the infamous "From Cream Puffs to Food Poisoning" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 349). Cullen pleasantly compares the Working Committee to "a self-proclaimed animal lover... regularly observed beating his dog" for daring to question whether the IBT leadership's hysterical factional campaign against Riker and Smith had anything to do with defending democratic centralism. According to the IBT, failure to accept the leadership's line on this matter is apparently sufficient to establish that one must be a "sub-Menshevik." It seems to us that we have heard this all somewhere before.

Cullen repeats the by now standard IBT line that the "real" issue in the 1917 West affair was Smith and Riker's failure to comply with the alleged formal request for a written proposal for 1917 West. Even before Nelson and Williams pointed out that there was no formal request but only a belated informal one, we had found it hard to believe that the "formal request" issue was anything but a pretext on the leadership's part.

Comrade Riker "rushed to the printer" — after waiting for the articles to be approved, which had already taken six weeks. Maybe a delay of only six weeks is rushing to the printer by the IBT's standards, but we take a different view.

Cullen concedes that the content of 1917 West was not at issue. In earlier documents, the IBT leadership concedes that the principle involved in the production of a local press was not at issue, either.

We are left with the IBT leadership's claims that failure to comply with a paperwork requirement, a rather common circumstance in the IBT, represented proof of "endgame political struggle" on behalf of "Menshevik localism," threatening the very existence of the IBT!

Hundreds of pages of internal documents on this "threat" were produced; a secret "pro-party" faction was created; a spy was commissioned to send secret reports from the Bay Area; draconian punitive actions were taken against the two comrades and the Bay Area local as a whole; the Bay Area local was reduced to a shadow of its former self; the two comrades were hounded and slandered and eventually driven out of the organization; and long-term supporters of the organization who questioned the leadership's actions (including all of the IBT's most active nonmember supporters in North America) were branded as disloyal sub-Mensheviks — all over compliance with a paperwork requirement?!

And then, to top it all off, we discover that the IS never properly established the paperwork requirement to begin with. This is really too much for words.

Logan's and Cullen's attempts to answer the real questions posed in "Bureaucratic Centralism in the IBT" are about as thorough as Cullen's response to the Working Committee's February 8 letter. The fact that Riley's authority to write for the IS was "undisputed by any member of that body" is not the point. If the IS never voted to request a proposal, Riley's request was not a formal request and therefore not a binding request. Writing for the IS and making decisions on their behalf are two different things.

Cullen implicitly recognizes this by stating that the directive "expressed the will of the IS," i.e., its subjective intent. It would not be necessary to claim this if an actual decision to request a proposal had been made. This subjectivist argument, first penned by Fischer/Frazier, is expanded upon in Cullen's letter:

"If Riley's directive expressed the will of the IS, and was understood as such by everyone on the IS, everyone in BABT and everyone else in the IBT, as indeed it was, the fact that it was not signed by the entire IS is meaningless."

Translation? Whether or not the request was formal is meaningless because everyone believed it was. Here's Marx on that one:

"Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge [a political tendency] by its consciousness."

That fact that no one in the IBT questioned this modus operandi is neither an argument that the request was formal nor, for that matter, that the group is healthy. Just the opposite. No one questioned it because the group was already functioning in a commandist mode.

Another example of the leadership's cavalier attitude toward democratic centralism is the October 2 letter in which Riley and Nason contravene an official statement allowing non-IEC members to request financial information. Was this flagrant disregard for decisions of elected leading bodies another "minor factual error" by Riley or was it "the will of the IS"?

For that matter, as the Working Committee pointed out in its February 8 letter, the original motions that the IS did pass on *1917 West* were in flagrant violation of relevant conference decisions. The IBT has not even attempted to refute this. This exposes the utter hypocrisy of the IBT leadership's "democratic centralist" posturing.

Cullen argues that there are "two mutually contradictory strands of thought" with regard to our position on the "formal request." First he quotes from the membership applications of Oren and Leisler of November 20, 1992, where they say that "Riker and Smith were wrong to violate democratic centralism." He then disingenuously counterposes to this the "Nelson/Williams line" that, in fact, such an executive order never existed to be violated.

Leisler and Oren applied for membership before Nelson and Williams pointed out that, contrary the misrepresentations of the IBT leadership, the "formal request" was never made. Upon learning of this, Oren and Leisler changed their position, as the IBT is well aware. The Working Committee endorsed "Bureaucratic Centralism in the IBT" in two different letters, and clearly stated in its letter of February 8 that it would neither endorse nor apologize for any other previous statements made during the controversy by persons who were not under its discipline at the time.

Cullen claims to find the Leisler/Oren statement

"...consistent with the statement in [your] 8 February letter to the effect that [we] have no quarrel with democratic centralism, only the way in which it was implemented. The IS, in other words, acted within its rights to require a proposal, but you think that, in doing so, it exercised those rights in a questionable and/or abusive manner."

The Working Committee never said that the IS acted within its rights to require a proposal, in the February 8 letter or anywhere else. This question was moot because the "formal request" was never made.

Similarly, Cullen's assertion that it is impossible to tell whether or not the Working Committee thought democratic centralism was violated is utterly false. There was no ambiguity. The Working Committee consistently maintained that there was no violation because there was nothing to violate.

Cullen does not repeat the IBT's secondary charge that since the "formal request" was not complied with, money spent on *1917 West* was therefore "misappropriated." It is worth pointing out that the IBT did not begin to advance this secondary charge, which adds slanderous connotations to the first, until six months after the fact. We believe that this secondary charge reflected a deliberate and utterly despicable attempt to exploit the previous slanders of the Spartacist League against Comrade Riker. It would be to the IBT's credit if it has indeed dropped this.

Nonetheless, Cullen does, in his appendix, make a tertiary charge recently invented by the IBT, having to do with the raising of funds for *1917 West*. The IS had directed that any funds to be spent to be spent on the publication in excess of \$150 "be raised independently by BABT." No further instructions or restrictions were placed on how this should be done. Accordingly, Riker and Smith solicited local supporters for contributions toward the publication of *1917 West*. Now, more than a year after the fact, the IBT wants to make an issue of the fact that

they may not have told the supporters that such contributions would be considered “over and above” any contributions they might otherwise have made, and has convinced one of the supporters to write a letter to this effect.

From the way this argument is formulated, the uninformed could easily be misled into thinking that the supporters were not told what the funds would be used for. This is simply not true. Assuming for the sake of argument that they were not explicitly told that their contributions would be considered to be over and above any contributions they otherwise would have made, we must point out that the IS directive did not specify that if funds were raised among local supporters (a likelihood the IS certainly could have foreseen), those funds would have to be above and beyond any contributions the supporters might otherwise make. The whole distinction sounds a bit like a Catch-22 to us anyway, since the IBT could just as easily argue that any contributions actually made for *1917 West* could otherwise have still been made to the IBT, and that therefore no funds actually raised could be used for *1917 West*. But this reduces the whole argument to an absurdity. Like so many aspects of this controversy, it is an absurdity.

For all the talk about the \$830 spent on *1917 West*, we have no doubt that considerably more money was spent sending Comrade Logan around the world on stipend to fight against this “menace” than was spent on the publication of *1917 West*. We also cannot fail to draw certain conclusions about an organization that considers it more important to suppress a local publication — even though (despite some contradictory statements) it admits that the content of the publication was not at issue — than to get its international publication out in a timely manner. (More than a year elapsed between *1917* Nos. 11 and 12.)

For us, the important issue is and has been the IBT’s increasing organizational degeneration, which we believe is qualitatively similar to what the IBT’s predecessor, the ET, found in the Spartacist League. Not surprisingly from this point of view, the IBT has moved away from the ET’s analysis of the “regime question.”

A striking illustration of the IBT’s recent “reevaluation” of the organizational or regime question is contained in Logan’s 19 January letter. After stating that the IBT “seek[s] unity with others who share the programme of socialist revolution,” he qualifies this:

“However, we also perceive programmatic differences between us, in the broad sense that the programme of a group is everything that the group does and stands for.”

This means that in effect the IBT “seeks unity” only with organizations that represent “everything that the [IBT] does and stands for,” since no formal programmatic differences were raised by either side. This sectarian approach to regroupment stands in fundamental contradiction to the ET/IBT’s earlier perspective of rejoining the international Spartacist tendency, despite the differences on the regime question.

Consistent with their obscuring the difference between an organisation’s formal program and its informal appetites and practices (“everything that the group does and stands for”) is the IBT leadership’s unsuccessful attempts to pin the Working Committee with the “Menshevik” label — only to expose themselves as bureaucratic centralists in theory as well as in practice. If the “norms” and the “implementation” of democratic centralism are essentially the same thing, as Comrade Logan argues with neo-Spartacist sincerity, then the leadership must always be right.

As in all degenerating organisations, the leadership’s purported adherence to “norms” comes into increasing conflict with its bureaucratic appetites. It is a deeply ironic, if not farcical, postscript to the *1917 West* dispute that the whole campaign against Riker and Smith — the accusations, the edicts, the hysteria over the “breaching of discipline” — turned out to be based on a “formal IS directive” that did not exist.

Cullen claims that the Working Committee relied on the attribution of “sinister motives” to the IS. Sorry, but such subjectivist arguments are the IBT’s bailiwick, not that of our predecessor organization. The Working Committee’s arguments were directed against the documented methods actually employed by the IBT leadership, and did not depend speculations about anyone’s motives. The Working Committee thought, and we think, that Marxists should not base their arguments on speculations about people’s motives. We do think any reasonable person would have to conclude that Comrade Riley’s demonstrably false assertions about the “formal proposal,” given the absolutely fundamental role they played in the IBT leadership’s arguments, were dishonest, but never at any point did the Working Committee assert or suggest anything about the motives of Riley or anyone else in the IBT.

To us, the motives of the IBT are irrelevant; what matters are the concrete, documented facts.

If the IBT is concerned that parallels between its “functioning” and that of the Spartacist League might imply sinister motives on the part of the IBT leadership, it should consider that blaming us for calling attention to these parallels will not make them go away. If we were, in fact, to speculate on the unspoken thoughts of the IBT leadership, we would suppose that they probably in their own way genuinely believe that they can employ Spartacist methods without harming their organization. It doesn’t matter. We have seen the results.

Cullen completely misrepresents Turner’s statement on the organizational norms of the old SWP versus those of the SL. Turner never suggested that the IBT had or would avowedly reject the norms of the old SWP. Neither does the SL! This fails to address the question of the role of the “SL model” relative to the “SWP model.”

Cullen refers to “most other members” of the Bay Area local agreeing with the majority. We are not

particularly interested in playing a numbers game, but since Cullen brings it up as though there were some large crowd, we should mention for the sake of the historical record that at the time in question this would mean — all two of them. Moreover, it is our understanding that these comrades were only won over to the leadership's position after the fact, and that the Bay Area local voted to go to press.

Cullen argues that the "unprecedented size" of *1917 West* justified the unprecedented way in which the IBT leadership treated it. This conveniently overlooks the fact that relevant conference decisions are supposed to be binding on the leadership of a democratic centralist organization. From the wording of the resolutions (quoted in the February 8 Working Committee letter), it is clear that they were intended to be all-encompassing.

As far as Cullen's misuse of the quote from Cannon on local presses is concerned, we must note that Cannon allows for cases of real need. The IBT's poor record on regularity of the press makes it clear that there was such a need. Secondly, Cannon motivates his position on the basis of the need to maintain a uniform line (something we certainly agree with), and Cullen concedes that the content of *1917 West* was not at issue.

Despite several conference decisions to the contrary, issues of *1917*, the international organ of the IBT, sometimes appeared as much as eighteen months apart. In his March 8, 1992, letter Logan addressed this grave problem.

"There is a notion that the most important thing about a propaganda group is that it puts out propaganda. Nonsense. The two most important things about a propaganda group are that it is a group, and that the line is more or less right. Getting out propaganda comes about number three on the list."

Logan presents social cohesion and group character as more important than what the group actually does. The IBT likes to claim that the Working Committee was apolitical, but in reality the Working Committee was challenging the IBT leadership's subordination of politics to the "organizational lever." As we have pointed out elsewhere (see *Revolutionary Theory* No.1), this subordination of politics has certain historical precedents.

A small group of people extraordinarily isolated from the masses that they claim they want to reach can acquire an in-group attitude and an exaggerated sense of their own importance in the historical process. As the documents show, the IBT leadership, producers of "the best Trotskyist journal in the world," could only see competition when the Bay Area local tried to actually produce more propaganda. Thus it came to be that the Bay Area was made the subject of a lesson in "higher consciousness."

It is no coincidence that the IBT has effectively abandoned the position of its predecessor organization, the ET, on the "regime question." Nor is it a coincidence that the IBT's star recruit in Montreal would openly write to Riley that he considered the ET's main analysis of the regime question in the Spartacist League to be no different from the (contemptible, according to him) intervention of the Working Committee.

It is always a tragedy when a communist group succumbs to bureaucratism. We take no joy in leaving behind an organization that we supported for many years, and that still remains programmatically close to us. But there was no choice.

The Communist Workers Group will carry on where the IBT has failed. We intend not only to uphold the Trotskyist program, but to return from the microvanguardist delusions of the IBT to the tried and true organizational methods of the early Third and Fourth Internationals. We look forward to getting back to work.